

WFOP CONFERENCE PLANNING SURVEY RESULTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Number of completed surveys: 159
 Survey requests sent: 421
Response rate: 37.8%

Summary Results:

- Almost 62% of respondents would like one weekend-long summer conference for the 75th celebration.
- The Green Lake Conference Center ranked highest for location of the 2025 conference, followed closely by Madison and then Green Bay/Door County. Green Lake was chosen as the top spot by 50% of respondents.
- The Green Lake Conference Center was the most commonly cited specific venue with 29 mentions, followed by Monona Terrace with four.
- Joy Harjo was suggested most often (17) for poets specifically recommended as the 75th keynote, followed by Billy Collins (16) and Naomi Shihab Nye (10).
- Feedback on frequency of conferences was fairly evenly split, with the majority preferring two conferences each year in the spring and fall (28.3%). “Mix it up” and one per year in the summer were tied at 22%.
- A majority of respondents (40.4%) want to continue holding conferences on Friday night and Saturday all-day. 27.6% would like to move to a full weekend, with 15.4% suggesting we mix it up.
- When asked “what would motivate you to attend more conferences,” a majority (55.5%) said “a mix of national poets with regional favorites.” The next highest response was “other” at 32.9%. Of these, a vast majority want more interactivity – workshops, breakout sessions, panels, critique groups, etc. Almost 23% would likely attend no matter what the agenda looks like, with 7% likely to not attend, regardless.
- A vast majority of respondents have attended five or fewer conferences in the last five years (78%). 27% have not attended any conferences.
- There was no prevailing theme from the additional conference suggestions, other than additional emphasis on workshops and interactivity (17 suggestions).
- When asked to rank in order of importance what you value most from membership, contests and publishing opportunities ranked highest, followed closely by the Museletter and regional fellowship. Over half ranked fellowship opportunities first (either conference or regional).
- 37.5% of respondents have been members for five years or less. 28% of respondents have been members for 16+ years.
- Almost 79% of respondents are over the age of 60. Only four respondents were 40 or less.

Recommendations:

- Hold one conference in the summer of 2025 at the Green Lake Conference Center.
- Consider a poet with US laureate status as the keynote. A majority of the top mentions had some affiliation with this position, past or current.
- Leave conference format as is, with two conferences per year on Friday and Saturday, or mix it up, periodically offering one longer conference per year.
- “Exposure to new poets and new styles of poetry ranked 2nd to last as what is valued most from membership, yet was cited as the 2nd most popular motivation for attending more conferences. This represents a gap that should be investigated.
- Increase interactive activities at conferences. Consider more workshops, a critique group, structured fellowship activities, emphasis on publishing and/or breakout sessions.
- Do more to encourage fellowship with new members and/or outside our comfort groups at conferences. Consider activities with randomly assigned tables, name tags with region, break-out groups based on topics or interest areas, etc.
- Engaging a more diverse membership and improving attendance by diverse members within the fellowship should be a higher priority. Their feedback is clearly not a part of these survey results, so it is difficult to make any strong recommendations for a future that involves them.
- Do more broad promotion of conferences and what happens at the conferences, beyond the Museletter. It appears there are a number of people who aren’t aware of what takes place, based on their responses (i.e.; hold a book fair, bring in bigger name poets to teach us).
- Create more ways to engage in fellowship outside of the conference setting including more emphasis on regional meetings, regional activities and workshops, critique groups, list-serves based on interest area (publishing, author exploration, etc.).

Detailed Results:

Q1. For our 75th celebration in 2025, should we continue the tradition of one weekend-long conference that year, or stick to our schedule of two?

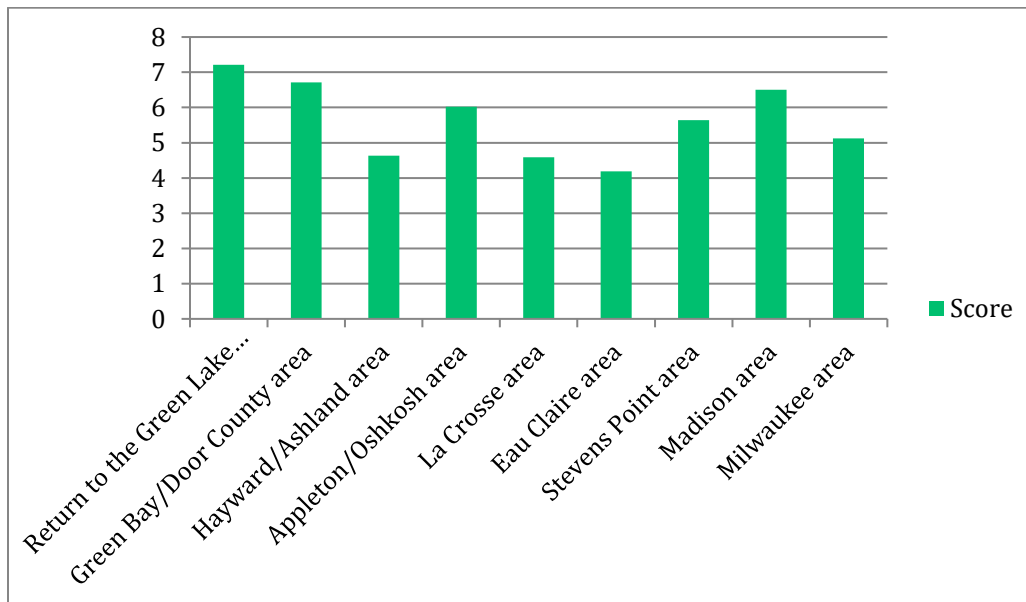
One weekend-long summer conference	61.94%	(96)
Stick to the two conference schedule, in spring and fall	29.03%	(45)
Other	9.03%	(14)

Other responses:

- I travel. If you choose to have a special summer conference, I may miss it. So I'd appreciate an opportunity in the northern part of the state another season, in addition.
- One annual conference should be in effect by 2025 and we can celebrate at that one.
- One week-long conference would mark the year as SPECIAL or different than usual, but would probably limit attendance somewhat.
- One conference in either spring or fall. Summer is too busy.

- Generally one would be more powerful. Don't forget, also, that each one will take a lot of work. Two conferences? Twice the work. Half the participation.
- I'm new--either ok, but I'd think once a yr might be best
- Hi, I'm 87 years old and don't expect to be able to attend the conference in 2025 and therefore don't want to answer these questions, since I will not be there. Blessings on your planning! Sister Irene Zimmerman
- Consider one multi-day conference that begins on a Wednesday, for example, and runs through Sunday
- Two conference schedule, but consider extending one to include special Sat eve/Sunday am activities
- Fine with either option -- however, given the planning and organization required, one conference might be more realistic.
- 50th and 65th precedents of weekend long
- Depends on what is offered, and where. 2 nights, or 1 night separately twice, would be the same cost.

Q2. Please rank where our 75th celebration in 2025 should be held. You can choose to rank them all, with 1 being your favorite and 9 being your least favorite destination OR you can select your top 3.



Q3. What would you suggest for a venue in your top-ranked area?

- Green Lake Conference Center (29)
- Unknown or no preference (24)
- A conference center/hotel (5)
- Downtown/not out in the country (5)
- Monona Terrace (4)
- Holiday Inn Stevens Point Convention Center (3)
- Fox Cities Exhibition Center (3)
- Stone Harbor Resort (3)
- University Pyle Center (3)
- Edgewater (3)
- Best Western Chequamegon in Ashland (2)
- Landmark Resort, Egg Harbor (2)
- Northland College in Ashland (2)
- Downtown Hilton (2)

- Have it where most people will attend
- Something on the far west side, not right downtown.
- Pablo Center
- NGVC
- LaCrosse Hilton
- University of Wisconsin Memorial Union
- LCO casino hotel
- Sturgeon Bay
- Wild Rice Retreat in Bayfield
- Somewhere easy to access, off 151
- NOT slam poetry.
- Bjorklunden
- Hilton
- Saint Kate The Arts Hotel
- any conference center in door county
- Red Lion Paper Valley Hotel
- Like a place for gathering, nature & other activities
- Park East Hotel
- Legendary Waters Resort in Red Cliff
- Outside, weather permitting
- Lawrence university
- Hyatt in Middleton
- AmericaInn
- last place stayed at..
- Sturgeon Bay Best Western
- Madison Concourse Hotel (downtown walkable)
- La Crosse---Radisson
- Fox Cities PAC
- Ashland
- Go with cheapest hotel room cost, unless Madison.
- Something like the Dodge Poetry Festival in Waterloo, New Jersey
- Something other than the Holiday Inn. Didn't we at one point go to another hotel? Stevens Point has the advantage of being central for almost everyone -- assuming there is good weather in late October. The hotel in Milwaukee was dreary. Is the Metro Hotel out of our price range? I didn't particularly like the Green Lake Conference Center. If you're looking for something more scenic, Holy Wisdom Monastery conference center just outside of Madison. Inexpensive. Good food. Meeting rooms.

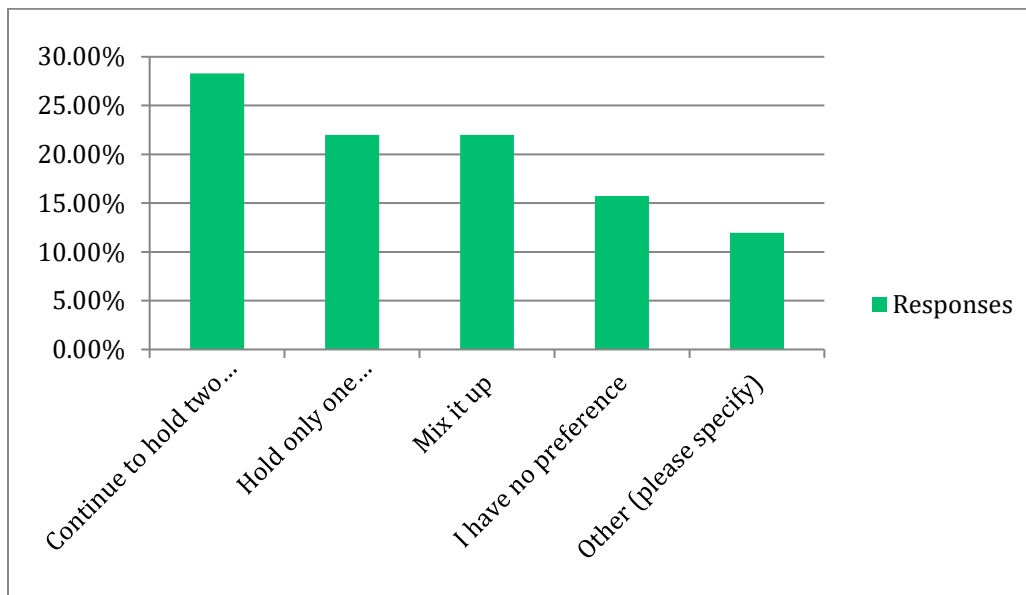
Q4. For our 75th celebration in 2025, who would you like to see as our featured poet of national stature?

- Unknown/undecided (20)
- Joy Harjo (17)
- Billy Collins (16)
- Naomi Shihab Nye (10)
- Ted Kooser (6)
- US Poet Laureate (6)
- Natasha Trethewey (4)
- Tracy K Smith (4)
- Dana Gioia (2)
- Ellen Bass (3)
- Jane Hirschfield (3)

- Martin Espada (3)
- Richard Blanco (3)
- A poet with ties to Wisconsin (3)
- Barbara Crooker (2)
- Bob Hiccock (2)
- Kay Ryan (2)
- Li-Young Lee (2)
- Sharon Olds (2)
- Taylor Mali (2)
- Ada Limon
- Adrienne Rich
- Alicia Stallings
- Allison Joseph
- Carl Dennis
- Carolyn Forché
- Christian Wiman
- Dasha Kelly Hamilton
- David Baker
- David Whyte
- Dorianne Laux
- Erika Meitner
- Eve Ewing
- Gary Snyder
- Hoa Nguyen
- Ilya Kaminsky
- Jericho Brown
- John Koethe
- John Prine
- Juan Felipe Herrera
- Katie Ford
- Khadijah Queen
- Laure-Anne Bosselaar
- Lisel Mueller
- Maggie Smith
- Margaret Atwood
- Marge Piercy
- Mark Doty
- Mauricio Kilwein Guevara
- Max Garland is as good as it gets
- Neil Hillborn
- Pattiann Rogers
- Robert Bly
- Ross Gay
- Sherman Alexie
- Stephen Dunn
- Terence Winch
- Wendell Berry
- Yusef Komunyakha
- Many of my favorite poets will probably have passed on by then.
- If James Harrison were still alive, I would nominate him, but maybe someone else from the West?

- Someone whose poetry is not too avant-garde or too techy
- Be sure to have a couple picked in case we don't get our first choice.
- save money and skip this? can read poetry on our own
- WFOP attendees of Dodge festival make a slate of candidates
- would prefer to see a tribute to past WFOP poets, ex. Francis May, Ellen Kort
- Carl Sandburg, Walt Whitman or someone who could address their/our craft without become lost in the subject of the poem.
- We should research this and find out who is wonderful right now
- Anybody who does interesting workshops.

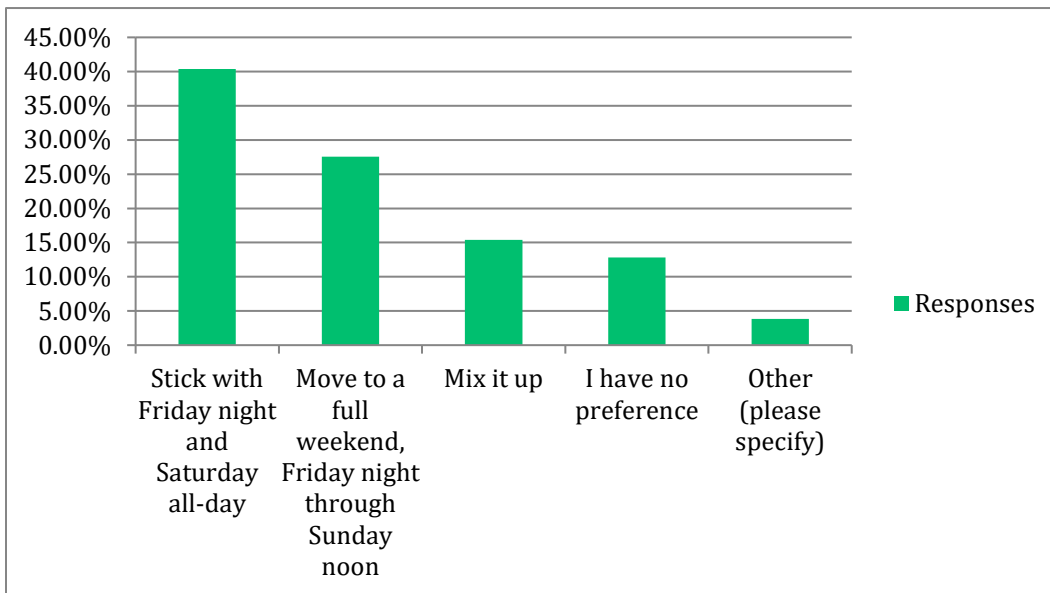
Q5. How should future conferences be structured?



Other responses:

- One conference, not in summer (8)
- 1-day regional conferences.
- Alternate years, one year hold the long summer weekend, the next year hold spring / fall conferences (2)
- Anniversary conference two + a half days, Green Lake
- One per year, alternating seasons (2)
- One/year or mix it up, alternating by years
- Or later in spring, weather not dependable usually in April
- see how this one goes. Answers may be evident.
- Two conferences-but less large-group reading and more small workshop sessions
- Don't care as long as I never have to run one again

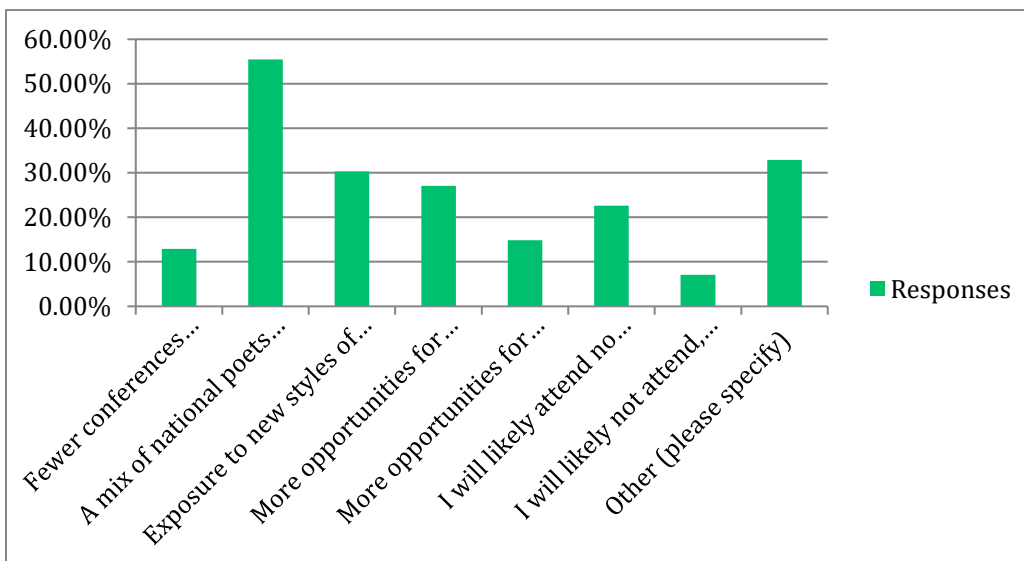
Q6. Should conferences continue to be just one night, or a full weekend?



Other responses:

- If two conferences, then just Fri. night and Saturday. If one conference, then full weekend (3)
- Full weekend for big anniversary years, otherwise status quo (2)
- Not everyone can do a full weekend, but most don't want to leave Sat Night, so a Sunday wrap up is kind of nice.

Q7. What would motivate you to attend more conferences (select as many as apply):

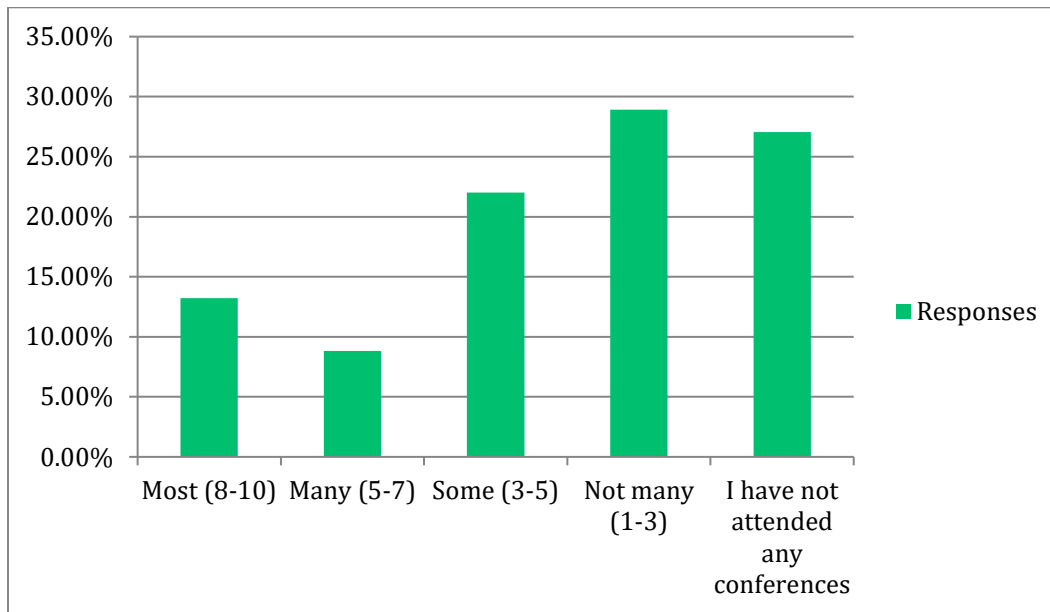


- **Writing Workshops (20)**
 - writing together, workshops
 - workshops/seminars/programs to build skills as a writer/where how to publish/how to put together a chapbook/poetry book publishers
 - workshops, critiques, presentations by poetry editors
 - workshops for learning (all we ever do is read, listen, read, listen. Let's write!)
 - workshops as well as keynote speakers
 - Perhaps more workshop type sessions and suggestions on publishing.

- Panels. Also, maybe small group sessions of, say, 4-5 people in which we could give each other feedback on a (short) poem in process; perhaps each participant should come with one or two specific questions about the poem that they bring.
- more workshops, hands-on type activities; less business/less roll call
- More workshop opportunities
- more opportunities to workshop with the poets
- More hands-on workshop type programs. Breakout sessions with smaller groups.
- More focus on craft, workshop, opportunities to brainstorm and write. Also help with practicalities of publication: how to build and market a collection, creating a master list of publications and what they're looking for. I'd also love to discuss essays ABOUT poetry, philosophical or aesthetic, ancient or modern.
- More breakout sessions for ways to improve your poetry and get it published etc
- More exposure to big name + challenging poets & poetry, alternatives to roll call, workshops
- writing focused themes, rather than cause-pushing themes. I want to come home with usable ideas for writing poetry.
- I don't care so much about "national" stature. Good workshops are central.
- interesting workshops
- How to seminars: How to compile your manuscript, How to find a publisher, etc.
- Craft-oriented panels and workshops
- **Location (11)**
 - more conferences in SE Wisconsin
 - More conferences in Madison
 - location in central part of state
 - Location and timing
 - Location
 - less driving
 - If they're in the eastern part of the state
 - Easy driving distance in the central part of the state
 - closer location to where I live if the weekend is open to me.
 - interesting location
- **Date conflicts (5)**
 - I am a snowbird and usually not available during traditional April, October conferences.
 - Often have date conflicts; would like to attend.
 - If I have no conflicts, I intend to attend, regardless
 - the biggest factor is the particular date. It either fits or doesn't.
 - Been too busy with other obligations to attend for several years, but may find time again.
- **Health/age is prohibitive (4)**
 - recent health problems have limited my attendance
 - if I were younger and more mobile
 - consider aging and/or/disabled poets
 - At 82 I don't go out to a lot of long events...but feel you have to market to the future.
- **Cost (3)**
- Stop prohibiting intro comments for roll call readings
- Retirement
- avoid politics as main theme
- People tend to stick with their friends. So structured fellowship opportunities are good for those of us who know few people. I also like to learn from excellent poets...not necessarily new styles but fun, thought-provoking ideas.
- One 3-day conference with nationally recognized poet, one shorter conference featuring regional poet(s).
- interesting national speaker
- Include a book fair and invite and feature publishers, literary journals, and book vendors to present and showcase as well.
- I would so enjoy attending but I have not been able to attend.

- I attend just about every conference already.
- full weekend, with mix of national and regional poets
- exposure to both old and new styles of poetry
- Any of these are interesting. Once we don't have sheep anymore it will be easier for me to attend.
- a mix of motivations, from national poets, opportunities to meet and talk, etc.
- A cocktail party Friday night

Q8. How many conferences have you attended in the last five years?



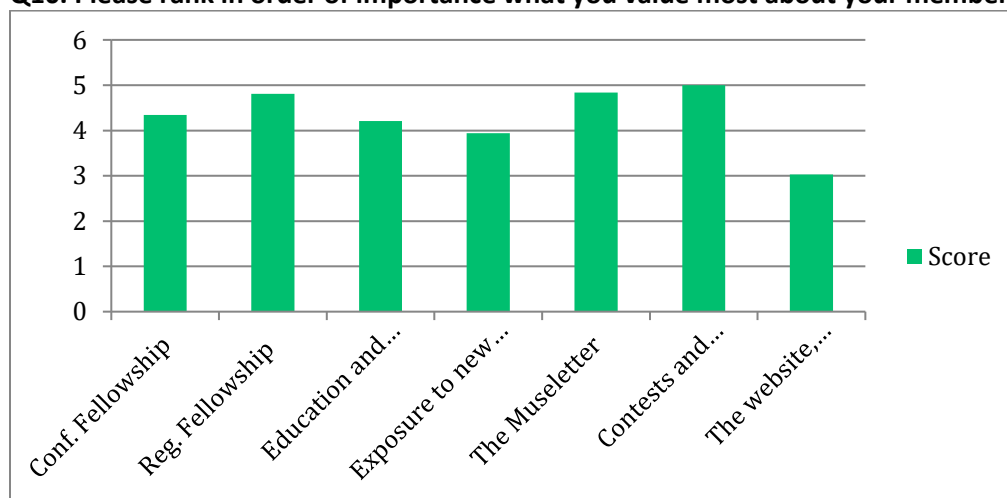
Q9. Before we move on to a few general membership questions, please share any additional suggestions for future conferences:

- **Workshop/conference suggestions (17)**
 - conf. programs are well-scheduled 2. a session on different types of readers group 3. a session on the interesting evolution of a poem's development from inception to finish
 - Craft workshops
 - Have guest poets take us through some writing workshops to expand our styles and themes, so we come away with new experiences.
 - I am more interested in insightful discussions about the craft of poetry and poetics itself.
 - I like mini-workshops in the longer conferences. I'd also like to see more mixing. Seems like people tend to sit with those they know. Wish we could mix it up.
 - I think everyone benefits from some kind of workshop
 - What about "break-out" small group sessions on craft?
 - I would love more craft talk and exercises.
 - I've always thought it would be fun to have a "learn from the greats" conference. A little play-acting! Lots of leaders dressed and fully in character for various poet laureates--Gwendolyn Brooks, Robert Frost, Simic, Pinsky, Dove+++ I'd go to a workshop led by "Donald Hall," for instance.
 - Optional workshop on Sunday
 - Make the remarks useful to members in a poetry-writing sense or in an understanding of literature. I don't want to hear something I could read on a web page. Craft workshops by the featured (national) speaker have been great.
 - more about submitting/publishing/success stories
 - More learning, less reading our poems/business stuff

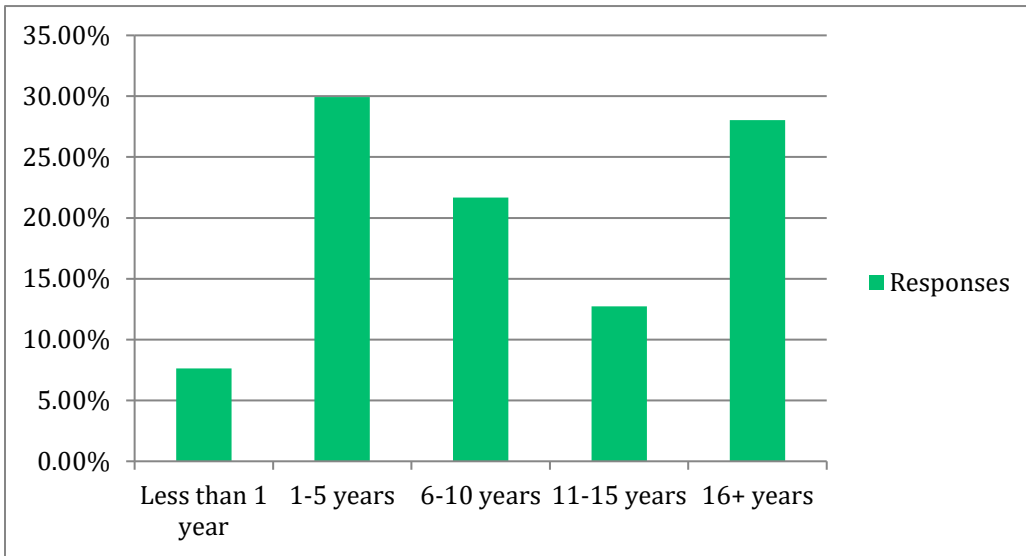
- more opportunities for smaller sessions & more choices each time
- Include a session in the agenda for break-out group discussions on different topics pertinent to writers and poets; 2) invite regional/national publishers to display for nominal fee
- Include writing workshops. Less roll call. Hands on writing of a university of Iowa caliber
- instructional sessions
- **Logistics (location, timing, cost, meals, etc.) (16)**
 - Keynotes should begin the conference rather than speaking at the end, when all are too tired to care.
 - Assign one or two people to be with the guest from beginning to end. At the anniversary conference in Green Lake the guest speaker was left to introduce herself. Cathy and Karla picked her up at the airport and got her situated at the hotel, but no one was there to introduce her. It appeared that one of the organizers was more concerned about the table decorations, than about what was actually going on in the room. It was rude. Fortunately, the guest was a good sport about it. But, it should NEVER happen again.
 - Be sure to have options for attending part of the conference (1-day, main speaker, etc.) to make the conference available to the hosting community
 - Conference locations should match membership density
 - Having a full breakfast seems to be important to some conference goers
 - Travel costs are a consideration. This is the reason I mention a single conference is enough.
 - Holding a conference at a major university such as UWM or Marquette University would be very popular and attract non-members
 - Attendance for me depends more on cost and date than location.
 - Going to just one conference a year mucks up a lot of process, like the membership getting to discuss and vote on things as a group and the contest schedule.
 - I have limited mobility. Would appreciate not having long treks between areas.
 - Lower registration cost, given the additional costs of travel and hotel... attendance becomes prohibitive for a single person on fixed income. This may not be possible, of course. Perhaps if there were a partial underwriter for the special conferences, that would allow registration fees to be lower (\$45?) for everyone.
 - Locations that provide time in nature.
 - Move them around the state to different counties
 - Need better acoustics, mic, power point presentations
 - Spring is hard for me and so is fall due to farming and livestock care considerations. Winter or mid-summer better.
 - The years I've been a member of WFOP, it seems to be rainy in the spring --can the conference be moved to mid-May?
- **Content (other than workshops or roll call) (8)**
 - a little more time to just browse through the books and talk to other poets.
 - Following conference, have detailed summary online
 - I would miss the fellowship if we went to one per year, which is a key reason I'm a member.
 - I believe the conferences need to be completely restructured. I'm no longer interested in conferences that consist of only one track with nothing but business meetings and readings.
 - I liked when we had a particular type of poetry or poet that ran through the whole conference.
 - Include a book fair and invite and feature publishers, literary journals, and book vendors to present and showcase as well.
 - Less is more when it comes to conferences as well as poetry!
 - Look at the offerings of the Lorine Niedecker festival; they are way more interesting and broad than WFOP
- **Roll Call (6)**
 - Eliminate the roll call poems on Saturday; provide an open mic on Friday night for poets who feel they need to read at the conference; if the board is really concerned about nurturing poets and increasing membership across generations, then offer ways for people to grow as poets.
 - I am old-fashioned and still love the roll call.

- I find the roll call boring.
- I would like some options/break out sessions -- rather than sitting & listening to roll call. We could have Open Mic for those who wish this, & other options that are different to provide choices
- Stop prohibiting intro comments on roll call poems
- Roll Call Poems and Open Mic grow tiresome because they are long.
- **New member (3)**
- **Thanks (3):**
 - It was exciting having Coleman Barks.
 - Keep up the good work. Thank you.
 - I think members have been doing a great job of scheduling conference speakers and topics.
- Conferences should celebrate poetry.
- I am a fearful poet. Although in my small world I am engaged, in the universe that conference presents I feel rather small. I think there might be many like myself.
- I hope we can focus on recruiting new, younger poets to join WFOP and come to conferences.
- Make everyone feel welcome.
- Provide an opportunity for general members to have a report related to poets who filled out survey.
- Some press coverage

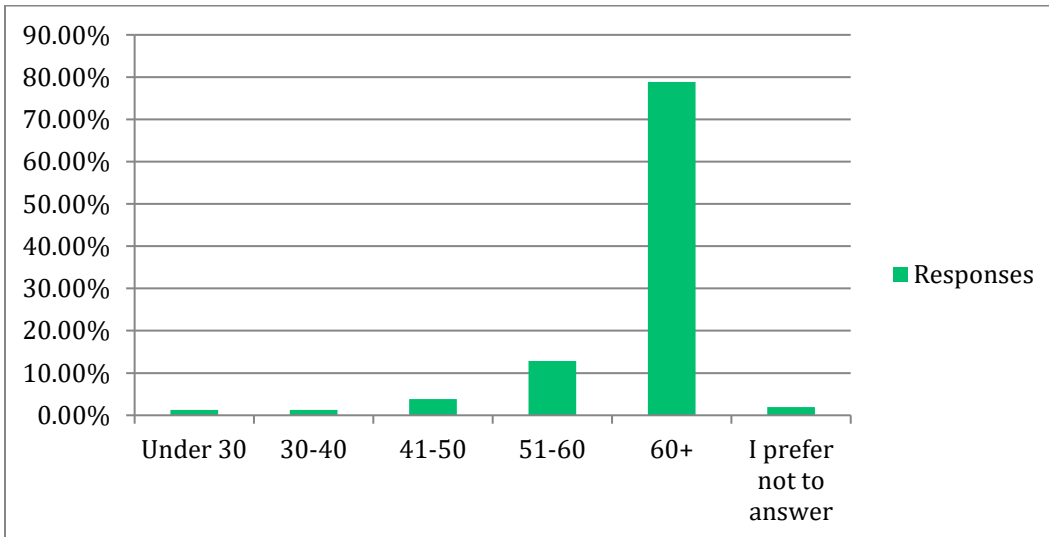
Q10. Please rank in order of importance what you value most about your membership in the WFOP.



Q11. How long have you been a member of the WFOP?



Q12. What's your age?



Q13. What else could we do to improve your experience as a WFOP member?

Nothing/keep up the good work (17):

- Your activities and fellowship exceed my expectations now!
- you're doing fine...I like to be kept in the loop. I continue to write and like the company.
- Too soon to tell - enjoying the experience thus far
- things are great as they are... Monthly readings at "Reader's Loft" are terrific.
- Thank you to everyone for all the hard work!
- Offer our gratitude and appreciate the efforts and generosity of contributions of our remarkable longevity and mission.
- keep up the good work
- Keep on truckin'!
- I have been very satisfied with my membership
- It is already good, but I need to get into a good poetry round robin group or similar
- I'm very happy with it.

- I think you're doing a great job. No complaints!
- I think WFOP does a great job. I'm proud to be a member. I just don't always participate.
- I can't think of anything. WFOP is great!
- Can't think of anything.
- can't think of anything at this point
- All good

Content (17):

- Someone to edit rough drafts of poems. Someone you can trust.
- Small groups that specifically allow exchange
- Run a Featured Poet of the month on the website or blog.
- Perhaps WFOP could sponsor an affordable workshop or two each year, with opportunities to write with various instructors.
- Move to a single annual conference in the summer.
- more fellowship time at conferences
- More educational and growth opportunities
- more connection to national poetry scene
- more area activities; awareness of groups; more interesting conferences
- Maybe integrate poetry into more music/art/community venues so it's not like once-a-year holiday church
- Love the prompts, more of those, perhaps weekly via email!
- Less emphasis on getting published.
- Keep inviting skilled planners to run the show!
- Keep having educational writing workshops with well-known poets who can teach.
- I put education and professional growth activities as #1 for #12, but WFOP doesn't offer this now. I think we need to change the conference format so education and professional growth is offered at the conference. I think a more professional conference would help to encourage membership across generations which the board is interested in doing.
- have online interviews of those in WFOP leadership positions
- A podcast or internet radio show and

More regional activities (9):

- Workshop scheduled regionally
- More readings, conferences, and opportunities available in the northern and northwestern part of the state. Not everyone lives near the big cities like Green Bay, Eau Claire, Madison or Milwaukee.
- More activities closer to my home
- Maybe sponsor regional meetings
- Mini-workshops throughout the state at inexpensive venues such as state parks, universities, public libraries, etc.
- Have regional chairs be more supportive and call regional meetings on occasion
- more involvement in and/or encouragement of book and literary arts festival in the northern half of WI
- Events in madison
- Encourage more local events such as readings, workshops, critique groups.

Focus on diversity by age/race, etc (7):

- Work on diversifying the membership by age/race etc. Many current members joined when they were young. Analyze why this is not happening anymore. Otherwise, our organization with age-out.
- We need to reach out to young poets. Give them workshop, publication, and poetry reading opportunities.
- We all could find ways to involve younger poets. I would like to see a map of our regions (not sure which one I'm in!). More short ways to volunteer. Learning opportunities.
- recruit younger members
- More diversity and youth
- Diversify membership to include younger poets and more men.
- Continue to try to attract younger people.

Other:

- Provide me with more time for writing???!?!???
- MY problem is personal - hearing
- maybe negotiate a discount (10/15%?) for members at local bookstores
- It would help to clearly indicate regions on name tags at conferences
- I'm old. The future is unknown. Just keep doing what you're doing.
- I think this sort of question is best answered in a roundtable discussion perhaps at the conference.
- A calendar business manager who can do math
- I need to participate more for a rich experience. Programs held on weekends are good for me.
- I don't think you can do anything about my WFOP experience. I am not close to any regional center.
- I appreciate snail mail, since my computer died.
- I am 79 and really got my money's worth with WFOP
- don't think it is possible to deal with the aging issue--would love to hear about some of the poets who helped build the organization
- Change my work schedule so that I can write poetry.
- As above.
- Again, options!
- A paid position to run organization so they can fully dedicate time to improving our programs/outreach/mission. Volunteers very busy, and we often lack skills needed.