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## EXECUTIVE POSITION PROFILE

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### ORGANIZATION

Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP)

### POSITION

Executive Director

### APPLICATION DEADLINE

July 12, 2024

### COMPENSATION

\$150,000 - \$175,000

### LOCATION

AWP is currently a remote work environment

### BRIEF

Ballinger | Leafblad is pleased to conduct this search for a new Executive Director at AWP

### CONTACT

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Marcia Ballinger, PhD, [marcia@ballingerleafblad.com](mailto:marcia@ballingerleafblad.com)



## ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

The **Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP)** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides support, advocacy, resources, and community to writers, college and university creative writing programs, and writing organizations.

Services provided by AWP for its members include:

- Best-in-class opportunities for in-person learning and connecting
- Leading-edge content and information
- Industry advocacy and representation
- Members-only support and networking

AWP is well known for its Annual Conference and Bookfair, which provides an essential shared space for writers, teachers, students, editors, and publishers. Each year, 8,000 to 10,000 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.

After years of being housed within academic institutions, in 2018, AWP became 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 Association.

Learn more at <https://www.awpwriter.org/>



## HISTORY

The Associated Writing Programs was established in 1967 by fifteen writers representing thirteen creative writing programs. The new association sought to support the growing presence of literary writers in higher education. At that time, English departments were mainly conservatories of the great literature of the past, and scholars fiercely resisted the establishment of creative writing programs. AWP was created to overcome this resistance, to advocate for new programs, and to provide publishing opportunities for young writers. Today, AWP, now the Association of Writers & Writing Programs, supports colleges and universities as well as individual writers as members.

## GOVERNANCE

AWP is governed by a board of directors who represent councils of creative writing programs and literary and philanthropic communities at large. The member creative writing programs of AWP are organized regionally into Councils. Member writers' conferences, festivals, and centers also have their own council. Individual members are also represented by members on the board.

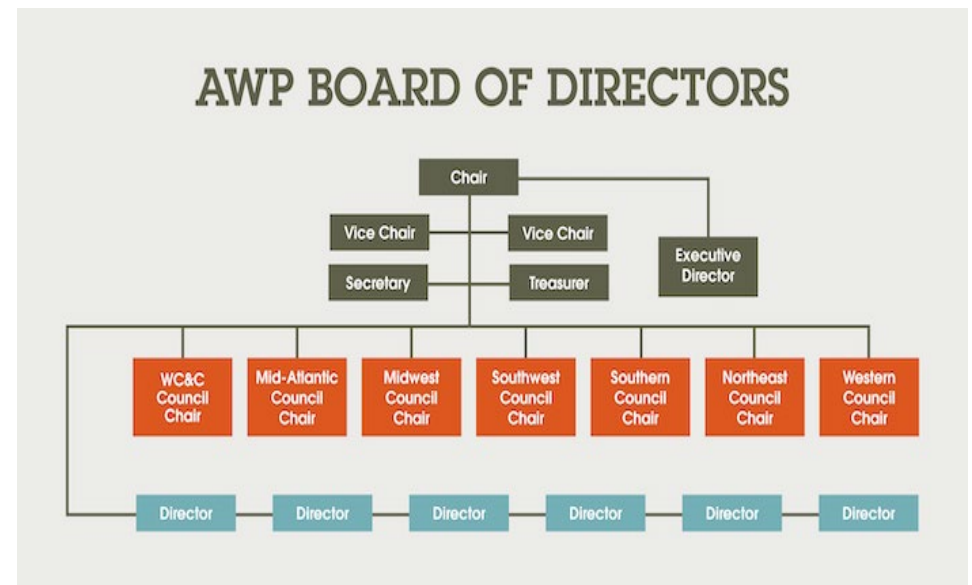
Area Councils are:

- AWP Western Council (Alaska, Alberta, British Columbia, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Manitoba, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, Saskatchewan, South Dakota, Washington, Wyoming, and Pacific Rim international programs).
- AWP Southwest Council (Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah).
- AWP Midwest Council (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Ontario, and Wisconsin).
- AWP Southern Council (Alabama, Arkansas, Caribbean Islands, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee).
- AWP Mid-Atlantic Council (Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia,).
- AWP Northeast Council (Connecticut, Labrador, Maine, Massachusetts, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Europe).

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- Writing Programs, currently referred to as Writing Conferences and Centers Council (all the constituents, nationally and internationally, who pay dues to the Writers' Conferences & Centers category of the AWP membership).

Each Council convenes at the AWP Annual Conference & Bookfair every spring.

The AWP Board of Directors and staff are passionate about creative writing, dedicated to serving the members, and committed to building an inclusive, diverse, and responsive association for the writers, teachers, students, and literary practitioners AWP serves.



## MISSION

AWP amplifies the voices of writers and the academic programs and organizations that serve them while championing diversity and excellence in creative writing.

## VISION

Be a responsive, innovative, and relevant association serving all members and stakeholders.

## VISION

The organization's stated goal is to strengthen AWP's foundational mission with renewed reflection as we become a more responsive, innovative, and relevant association serving all of our members and stakeholders. We are working to create a thoughtful, intentional, and inclusive space where the larger literary community can gather to exchange wisdom on the art and craft of writing and celebrate vibrant creativity and accomplishment.

Four strategic objectives define how these goals will be met:

- support individual members in their literary pursuits while providing opportunities to participate in the larger writing community
- support creative writing programs and groups that build and sustain rigorous learning and professional environments
- respond with reenergized support for an increasingly diverse membership that has been and is changing the association for the better
- offer year-round support, services, and programming to communities of creative writers



## COMMITMENT

### **Commitment to Members and the Literary Community**

As a national professional association of creative writers and writing programs, AWP brings together independent writers, academic writing programs, journals, presses, and arts organizations. In addition to hosting the largest annual gathering of writers in North America, AWP builds supportive communities united by a love for the literary arts through our extensive website, thriving mentorship program, and magazine dedicated to the craft of writing.

### **Commitment to Staff**

As an employer, AWP is dedicated to the creation and nurturing of a workplace environment in which everyone feels valued as a dignified member of the community of writers, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, age, protected veteran or disabled status, or genetic information.

### **Commitment to Everyone**

We recognize the transformative power of literature and strive to be an ally in making the world a more equitable and compassionate place. We condemn discrimination in any form, whether it be race, ethnicity, gender identity and orientation, national origin, age, or disability. We are committed to enacting inclusion and diversity in all our programs and engaging in advocacy where possible.



## IMPACT AREAS

### Advocacy

AWP amplifies creative voices by providing a range of resources to help writers direct their advocacy.

### Advocacy for Professional Standards

AWP's Professional Standards Committee provides letters of support, policy statements, advice, and assistance for the programs and faculty of AWP. The committee coordinates AWP's advocacy of fair treatment of writers in the academy. It also facilitates the creation of new creative writing programs and conducts evaluations or independent assessments of programs at the request of their institutions.

### Advocacy for the Arts and for Public Funding of the Arts and Education

AWP is a proud partner of Americans for the Arts Action Fund—the nation's largest grassroots advocacy movement dedicated to mobilizing one million advocates to advance the arts and arts education in the United States.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

AWP is in the final year of a 5-year Strategic Plan made up of goal statement, objectives, and related activities designed to meet its strategic objective.

**Goal:** AWP creates and nurtures the environments that sustain and support a vibrant, collegial, and inclusive literary community.

### Objectives and Activities:

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

- Facilitate opportunities for the individual writer
- Engage members through multiple platforms
- Survey individual members
- Provide relevant career services
- Promote and expand the Writer-to-Writer program

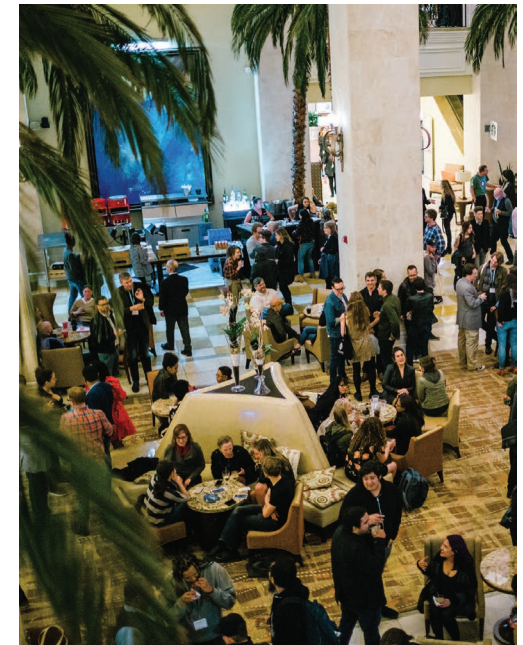
Support creative writing programs and groups that build and sustain robust learning and professional environments.

- Support and advocate for academic programs
- Continue annual writing awards
- Broaden connections and relationships beyond academia

- Review hallmarks and explore accreditation
- Continue quality assessment and research feasibility of accreditation service
- Support and advocate for K-12 programs

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

- Update Institutional values and strengthen diversity and inclusion
- Update and redesign website
- Improve accessibility to AWP's web-based resources
- Expand and improve AWP's social media presence
- Improve Annual Conference & Bookfair
- Support evolving literary community



### SUMMARY

The Executive Director is the chief executive officer of the Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) and is responsible for providing effective leadership to further the Association's consistent achievement of its mission, and to attain operational stability, growth, and the Association's financial objectives.

### MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors. Direct reports include Director of Finance & Operations, Director of Conferences, Director of Membership Services & Publications and Director of Communications & Technology. There are 18 full time and 2 part time staff members and 400+ volunteers. The Executive Director manages a budget of \$3.5M.

### ESSENTIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

#### **Strategic Planning**

- With the Board of Directors, oversee the strategic direction of the Association; provide visionary input to the creation of strategic plans.
- Be an inspirational voice that can explain the organization's strategy to staff, authors, and external stakeholders.
- Bring a wide lens, an openness to many voices, and a positive commitment to the ongoing impact of the Association.
- Focus on reaching new members and deepening their engagement.
- Monitor and evaluate the outcomes and impact of AWP's plans and objectives. Assess and recommend changes to the strategy and plans as needed.

#### **Program Development and Administration**

- Lead consistent progress in achieving the mission, goals, and associated tasks that are aligned with the Association's five-year visionary Strategic Plan, and any subsequent Board-approved strategic plans.
- In close collaboration with the Director of Conferences, and in partnership with the Board, plan and analyze the sustainability and possible diversification of the Association's conference and bookfair activities.
- Oversee the development of quality programs that enhance AWP membership, and member experiences.
- Oversee and promote active and supportive participation by volunteers and interns in appropriate aspects of the Association's work.
- Maintain a working knowledge of significant developments and trends in the field of creative writing, in the pedagogy of creative writing, and in the assessment of creative writing programs.
- Identify, cultivate, and assist in the recruitment of Board members with appropriate and needed skills, experience, connections, and diversity, to further the mission of AWP.

#### **Communication and Public Outreach**

- Serve as the AWP's chief spokesperson, promoting the Association's positive impact, values, and its important supportive role in advocacy for the literary arts and creative writing in regional, national, and international contexts. Effectively represent the programs and the point of view of the Association to other agencies, organizations, academia, the media, writers' programs, individual writers, governments, and the general public.
- Maintain full and open communication with the board, keeping them apprised of relevant organizational information and metrics.
- Oversee the publicizing of activities, conferences and bookfairs, programs, awards, publications, and AWP's goals.

- Promote the geographic and numerical expansion, deepened engagement with, and sustainability of the Association’s membership in all membership categories, with an intentional and continuing effort to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Establish trusted working relationships and cooperative arrangements with the community of creative writers, literary and arts advocacy and support organizations, AWP’s caucuses, and similar literary partner organizations and centers in North America and beyond.
- Promote and oversee the Association’s responsible and engaging development and use of social media and promotional communications.
- Conduct fundraising activities to support the programmatic work of the organization.
- Provide leadership and direction to the Association’s publications with a particular focus on *The Writer’s’ Chronicle*, ensuring the highest standards of quality writing and graphics that is responsive to AWP’s readership’s interests, the generation of reliable and diversified advertising revenue, and overall publication affordability standards.

### **Staff Leadership and Management**

- Provide visionary, collaborative, caring, professional, ethical, and motivational leadership of AWP staff. Foster a shared commitment to responsiveness toward the Board, membership, and other stakeholders of the Association.
- Be responsible for the recruitment, employment, and release of personnel, including paid staff (full-time and part-time), interns, and volunteers.
- Ensure that job descriptions are developed, regular performance evaluations are held, and sound human resource practices are in place.
- See that an effective management team, with appropriate provision for succession, is in place for each department.
- Encourage staff, intern, and volunteer development and education, and assist program staff in relating their specialized work to the strategic goals of the Association.
- Maintain a positive culture which attracts, retains, and motivates a diverse staff of highly qualified, ethically engaged, and team-spirited people.

### **Budget, Facilities, Contracts and Finance**

- In close collaboration with the Director of Finance and Operations, be responsible for developing and maintaining sound financial practices.
- Identify, build, and maintain strong relationships with a targeted number of key partners to expand, deepen, and diversify the Association’s individual, foundation, philanthropic, and corporate donor base.
- Work with the AWP staff, the Finance and Audit Committee, the Director of Finance and Operations, and the Board in preparing an approved annual budget and audited accounts; see that the Association operates within budget guidelines and in full compliance with auditing standards.
- Oversee the responsible investment, reporting, and prudent use of designated Association funds and endowments.
- Ensure that adequate insurance policies are entered into and maintained as appropriate.
- Oversee all Association contracts and legal agreements.
- Ensure that adequate funds are available to permit the Association to carry out its work.
- Jointly, with the Chair and Secretary of the Board of Directors, conduct official correspondence of the Association, and jointly with Board-designated officers when appropriate, execute legal documents on behalf of the Association.

### **DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS**

- A passion for literature and a belief in the transformative possibilities inherent in creative writing. A belief in the value of creative writing education and creative writing communities.
- Deep experience and recognized leadership in association management or a related professional services field.
- Interest, background, and experiences related to creative writing or a related creative field.

- Experience, leadership style, and gravitas to have credibility in the literary community.
- Strategic planning, visionary thinking, and operational implementation experience.
- Management expertise, including past experience leading a staff of a similar size to AWP, developing and mentoring people, building teams, and fostering a mission-centric, collaborative organizational culture.
- Experience leading an organization with a remote work environment.
- Meaningful experience in fundraising and related activities, with a demonstrated ability to raise money from individuals and philanthropic sources.
- Familiarity with marketing, publicity, and sales; comfortable overseeing the organization's website and comfort with a variety of external communications including new media engagement.
- Interest in furthering AWP's mission as a nonprofit literary organization.

## LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

**Cultural Competence, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion.** A commitment to the values and best practices that inform and influence the core purpose and values of the organization.

**Teamwork.** Comfort with and enthusiasm for working in a small team and contributing to the generation of new ideas while also maintaining an effective autonomous workflow.

**Partnership Building.** Enthusiasm for and ability to build and maintain strong interpersonal relationships and partnerships with outside organizations and individuals to inform and improve internal work-product.

**Project Management.** Demonstrated effectiveness in organizational and time management skills.

**Program Evaluation.** Solid experience with and understanding of program evaluation methods, including quantitative techniques.

**Emotional Intelligence and Humility.** Ability to acknowledge the achievements of others, to share credit, and to welcome feedback.

## TRAVEL

This position requires regular travel to attend conferences, meetings, and events.

## COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The salary range for this position is \$150,000-\$175,000. Compensation includes participation in the organization's comprehensive benefits plan.

- Health, Vision, and Dental Insurance, heavily subsidized for staff and family
- Paid Vacation and Sick Leave
- 401k plan with a 6% match after the first three months

## TO APPLY

Inquiries may be directed to Lars Leafblad: [lars@ballingerleafblad.com](mailto:lars@ballingerleafblad.com).

Applications will be accepted until July 12, 2024 or until the position has been filled, which may be earlier. There will be an immediate and ongoing review of candidates, so *we encourage and appreciate early applications*. All inquiries will remain confidential.