

**Systems-Mapping Alberta's Writing Community: the Writers' Guild of  
Alberta's Role in Collaborative Community Development**

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I wish to dedicate this research to all the writers who have yet to come, whether they be young or old, and the readers who create space for storytellers to share their tales and bring them new life with every read through. Community is nothing without our stories, and this adventure has truly been life changing.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### OBJECTIVES

This Master's Project examines the Writers' Guild of Alberta's (WGA) current role and interorganizational relationships and maps and analyses the system that underpins the writing community in Alberta. Through the documentation and analysis of the writing system, the findings are designed to help inform decisions made by the WGA Board of Directors about the role the WGA could play in fostering a vibrant writing community.

Within a diverse and complex system like the Alberta writing community, organizations can easily fall into habits of competition because of similar audiences, funding sources, and program delivery. These behaviours are referred to as system archetypes because the behaviours can be easily recognized across different systems and often result in similar outcomes. There are also common solutions to address these archetypes and improve overall system performance. Therefore, any proposed change to the WGA's role needs to be considered in the context of the community it operates within and prior to a decision being made.

### BACKGROUND AND ISSUE DEFINITION

Writers are an essential part of the social and economic fabric of our communities. They are the storytellers, the imagination engines, and an essential mirror for society. In Alberta, there are thousands of writers supported across the province by arts service organizations. The largest of these organizations is the Writers' Guild of Alberta (WGA), which is the client for this Master's Project.

Founded in 1980, the WGA has supported the development of writers through direct services such as workshops and manuscript programs. It has also fostered a sense of community through delivery of events and celebrations like the Alberta Literary Awards that recognize achievement in writing. The WGA plays a critical role as the primary arts service organization for writing within the province and with that comes an inherent leadership role. Therefore, the role the WGA chooses to play in the future has the potential to provide great impact on the community.

The WGA is facing several decisions about their opportunities and challenges. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic resolved some long-standing program delivery challenges when virtual delivery options became more accepted and broadly used. Additionally, its strategic plan has been disrupted and the WGA's long-time Executive Director has retired.

Now, the organization is seeking input on how it can leverage system change for the benefit of writers and other organizations within the writing community in Alberta. This Master's Project responds to this need for input by examining its current role and considering how that role could or should change in the future.

### METHODOLOGY

This Master's Project takes a systems approach to examining an organization's role, which allows for thoughtful engagement with stakeholders and understanding current dynamics that operate and keep the system working. As mentioned, the WGA is one of many arts

service organizations focused on providing writing supports to Albertans. For this reason, stakeholder analysis and engagement is essential to capturing the full picture of the writing community and the roles required to support it.

To conduct this research, participants in the system were asked to give their perspectives on what the current state is and to articulate hopes for the future. Specifically, key informant interviews were held with WGA staff and other arts service organizations from the local, provincial, and national levels. The semi-structured interview transcripts underwent a thematic analysis to generate common themes and findings. The findings from the interviews were used to formulate a stakeholder analysis and subsequent system maps. The stakeholder analysis and system maps were also analysed to identify additional findings.

## **FINDINGS**

Findings of this research confirmed assumptions that the writing community contains many organizations who share similar goals, funding sources, expenses and audiences. Many organizations described a state of co-existence between organizations as opposed to true collaboration. Participants noted that collaboration is important within the community but often articulated a desire for improved collaboration.

The research also reinforces a perception that the WGA is considered leader within the writing community. The stakeholder analysis confirmed that the WGA is generally well supported by partners and fellow writing organizations. Yet, the researcher also noted that some work could be undertaken to strengthen relationships with national writing organizations as they had the least interest in Alberta's writing community or participating in the research. When organizations from national writing organizations were approached to participate in the research, many declined and stated they did not feel they had anything to contribute as far as input or commentary about Alberta's writing community or the WGA's role within it.

Within the writing community, the research shows that there exist a few common system archetypes that may be limiting the writing community from its full potential. Examples of these archetypes can be seen through perceptions that the same writers are often recognized with awards or receive opportunities to teach workshops on writing. These are examples of the "Success to the Successful" archetype. Also, because writing organizations share goals and audiences, they often compete for attendance at programs and events through scheduling, which is an example of "Accidental Adversaries".

To address these archetypes and leverage the WGA's current assets, findings demonstrate there is support for change in the WGA's role.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Building off the interview findings, should the WGA wish to seek a more collaborative role within the writing community, there are several recommendations for consideration. This research leverages the current system assets and the assets of the WGA and seeks to address the system archetypes at play through recommendations about the WGA's role within the writing community.

The following recommendations are being made to the Writers' Guild of Alberta for consideration:

- 1. Adopt a hybrid Strategic-Connector role.**
  - Assume a community liaison role and connect writers with writing organizations to meet their needs
  - Leverage the current leadership status of the WGA and shift the focus on the WGA towards advocacy, community research and recognition over program delivery.
- 2. Adopt a collaborative, cross-organizational planning approach.**
  - Build an outcome aligned strategic plan for the writing community with other writing organizations to leverage shared goals and reduce competition across the system.
  - Implement and monitor the plan through quarterly governance meetings, and regular administrative meetings.
- 3. Conduct a community-wide needs assessment to examine community needs, improve accessibility, and drive inclusion.**
  - Work collaboratively with other writing organizations to determine whole community needs.
  - Leverage the cross-organizational planning approach to execute any findings.
- 4. Continue to recognize and celebrate writers.**
  - Maintain and enhance existing programs related to celebrating writers and the Alberta writing community, like the Alberta Literary Awards.

These recommendations are a combination of governance and administrative purviews and consider the WGA's role at strategic and execution levels.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This Master's Project examines the current role of the Writers' Guild of Alberta (WGA) within the writing community in Alberta and engages with WGA staff and stakeholders to articulate a future state role for the organization. The writing community in Alberta is large and diverse and filled with many writing organizations focused on supporting it. The WGA is the largest provincial writing organization in Canada. Through the documentation and analysis of the writing system, the findings are intended to inform decisions made by the WGA Board of Directors about the role the WGA could play in fostering a vibrant writing community.

This chapter of the report provides an overview of the project and background information about the WGA and its history supporting the writing community in Alberta. Primary and secondary research questions are defined and the structure of this report is also presented.

### MASTER'S PROJECT CLIENT

The Writers' Guild of Alberta (WGA) is the primary arts service organization in Alberta for writing and is the client for this Project. As the primary arts service organization, it receives significant grant funding from the Government of Alberta and has a mandate to serve all Albertans who participate in the writing community, in both rural and urban locations (Alberta Foundation for the Arts, 2021a). Established in 1980, the WGA "support[s] and advocate[s] for all writers and provide[s] opportunities to grow and connect while enriching Alberta's culture and economy" (Writers' Guild of Alberta, 2021a). The WGA defines its members as "professional writers, aspiring professionals, and hobbyists" (Writers' Guild of Alberta, 2021c). Today, the WGA serves approximately 960 members. At its inception, the WGA was focused on advocating for sustainable arts funding to the literary arts and building a cohesive writing community that fostered a sense of community and belonging (Stallworthy, 2010).

Currently, the WGA provides a variety of programs and services to writers in Alberta including manuscript reviews, workshops, writing retreats and youth writing camps. Its service delivery is a mix of in-person events and virtual, in a range of communities across the province. It also hosts the Alberta Literary Awards annually and a writing conference where all writers can attend and improve their craft.

The WGA is the client for this Master's Project. The primary contact at the WGA for this project is Giorgia Severini, Executive Director. Giorgia Severini was appointed as Executive Director in 2022 but has held other positions with the WGA since 2008 (Writers' Guild of Alberta, 2021d).

As an organization focused on province-wide service delivery, there are many points of intersectionality (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011) that need to be considered in service delivery. Points of intersectionality include:

- Physical location of members: Rural vs. Urban service delivery challenges
- Social location of members: Indigenous, immigrant, settler, LGBTQIA+,
- Economic location of members: Subsidies to under-privileged members vs. Affluent members providing sponsorship

- Writing genres of members: Membership spans all genres (literary, nonfiction, fiction, poetry, memoir, essay, short story, etc.)
- Experience of members: Amateur vs. Professional writing members

## PROJECT PROBLEM AND BACKGROUND

Alberta's writing community is dynamic and includes many organizations that support its vibrancy. Over the years, other writing organizations have been founded across the province to fill niche needs within the writing community, such as genre specific non-profit organizations or festivals. These organizations at times work in partnership with the WGA and other times, they operate in competition. In 1988, a report was released by the Department of Alberta Culture & Multiculturalism and the WGA about the business of writing in Alberta and one of the recommendations called for increased dialogue between writing organizations in Alberta (Stallworthy, 2010).

In the past, efforts were made to create a Western Council of provincial writing organizations with representation from the Saskatchewan Writers Guild, the WGA, the Manitoba Writers Guild, and the BC Federation of Writers (Stallworthy, 2010). Despite these efforts, there was little interest in maintaining the Council and it was disbanded. To this day, strategic focus has also been specific for each organization within the system, both nationally and provincially.

While these organizations are generally aware of each other, there is little to no documentation on how they currently interact and work together or in competition for the benefit of the writing community. As a result, it is difficult to navigate the system and grow and mature organizations within it. The constraints and gaps are also not well defined within the system. Common anecdotal concerns of organizations include funding, financial sustainability, and effective governance (Stallworthy, 2010).

Numerous changes in the past several years have forced the WGA to reexamine its role. The COVID-19 pandemic resolved some long-standing program delivery challenges when virtual delivery options became more accepted and broadly used. Additionally, its strategic plan has been disrupted and the WGA's long-time Executive Director has retired. In this Project, the WGA is seeking input on how the organization can leverage system change for the benefit of writers and other organizations within the writing community in Alberta. This could be achieved by examining its current role and considering how that role could or should change in the future.

Before determining a new role, it is important to examine the overall writing system in Alberta. As the current role of the WGA is provincial in nature, the Alberta writing community is the focus of this research. Taking a systems approach to examining an organization's role allows for thoughtful engagement with stakeholders and understanding current dynamics that operate and keep the system working. As mentioned, the WGA is one of many arts service organizations focused on providing writing supports to Albertans. The WGA plays a critical role as the primary arts service organization for writing within the province and with that comes an inherent leadership role. Therefore, the role the WGA chooses to play in the future has the potential to provide great impact on the community.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this research project is to examine the Writer's Guild of Alberta's (WGA) current role and interorganizational relationships and then map and analyze the system that underpins the writing community in Alberta. The findings from this research are intended to inform decisions made by the WGA Board of Directors about the role the WGA could play in fostering a vibrant writing community.

To do this, the project objectives include:

1. To examine the WGA's current role and interorganizational relationships.
2. To map and analyze Alberta's writing community.
3. To identify future roles the WGA Board of Directors could consider for the organization within the writing community.

The primary research question is:

**What role should be assumed by the WGA to collaborate effectively within the writing community?**

Effectiveness will be assessed in this report through alignment, shared resources, and reducing or eliminating duplication. Because the WGA operates in a complex system of writing organizations, the role it plays should be considered against the impacts of that role on other organizations as well as its own operations.

The research can be further defined by the following secondary research questions:

- Understanding Identity
  - What role does the WGA currently play within the writing community in Alberta?
  - Are there programs or services the WGA should cease to deliver because they are better aligned with other organizations and their mandates than with the WGA's role and mandate?
- Understanding Interactions
  - Which organizations support the WGA's current role?
  - Which organizations compete with the WGA in its current role?
- Understanding Motivations
  - Where are leverage points within the system that can help strengthen the WGA's role in Alberta?
  - How best does the WGA maintain its competitive advantage as Alberta's primary arts service organization focused on writing and literary arts?

## PROJECT SCOPE, LIMITATIONS AND DELIVERABLES

This Master's Project includes an assessment of opportunities related to the Alberta writing community and the WGA. It does not include implementation planning or implementation of any recommendations. This report yields recommendations that are also specific to the WGA and should not be immediately applied directly to another organization.

The recommendations of this report were developed based on information collected via the Internet and through key informant interviews and are limited by the time they were collected (November-December 2022) and by those who participated.

The following deliverables are a result of this Master's Project:

- A literature review
- Stakeholder analysis
- System maps of Alberta's writing community
  - Relationships between organizations
    - Partnerships
    - Synergies and competition
  - Roles within the system
  - System archetypes
- Recommendations

## ORGANIZATION OF REPORT

This report is divided into seven key sections:

- Introduction: an overview of the project, its background and the reports contents
- Literature Review: a review of existing literature relevant to the topic of the research
- Methodology and Methods: an overview of how the research has been designed and which methodologies and methods were used to respond to the research question
- Key Findings: results of the stakeholder analysis and interviews
- Discussion and Analysis: a discussion and analysis of the meaning of findings and their influence on the mapping of the writing community in Alberta
- Recommendations: considerations for the client on how to leverage the current writing system to strengthen their role in relation to their organizational goals
- Conclusion: summary of results and concluding thoughts from the research

References and appendices can be found at the end of the report.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

For this Project, a background research literature review was conducted. Research background literature reviews are used to explain what sources had the largest impact on the design and execution of a research project (Harris, 2019). The literature review conducted examined the scholarly literature on systems design and mapping and stakeholder analysis methodologies. Literature was also reviewed to further understand and conceptualize arts organizations in Canada with the attempt to focus on non-profit organizations that were related to literature and writing.

Following an initial assessment of scholarly resources, it was determined there was a significant gap in academic research specific to arts service organizations focused on literature and the craft of writing. Arts organizations were initially used to a proxy because the WGA is a literary arts organization, however most of the scholarly resources reviewed related more to artistry and the role arts organizations play in individual artist inspiration or how arts organizations can be run like business (examples include Turbide et al. (2008) who discuss financial health and artistic success, or Fanelli et al. (2020) who examine collaborative governance and financial sustainability). These perspectives were determined to not be within scope or germane to the research questions. As a result, a broader review of literature related to non-profit organizations was considered to gain insight into the literary sector for systems design, mapping, and stakeholder analysis purposes.

The following literature review seeks to provide an appraisal of existing scholarly knowledge to help answer the research question of the project:

### **What role should be assumed by the WGA to collaborate effectively within the writing community?**

The following topics were reviewed to help respond to the primary research question:

- Systems thinking and change
  - Systems thinking
    - System archetypes
    - Systems change and shared vision
  - Connecting systems thinking and community development
- Collaboration
  - Interorganizational collaboration
  - Motivations for collaboration
  - Nature and degree of collaboration
- Stakeholder Analysis
  - Approaches to stakeholder analysis

A total of 25 articles and 3 books were read for this literature review. Dates of publication varied between 1997 and 2021. Key search terms used included: “arts organizations and collaboration”, “non-profit collaboration”, “stakeholder analysis”, “systems thinking”, “systems mapping”, and “systems design”.

## SYSTEMS THINKING AND CHANGE

Formative theories that influenced the methodology and approach of this research project are the concepts of systems thinking and systems change in a community development context. To reinforce the methodology taken in this Master's Project, a review of scholarly literature about systems thinking and systems change and its relationship to community development has been conducted.

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### SYSTEMS THINKING

Morgan (2005) acknowledges there are many perspectives on systems thinking, including complex adaptive systems, systems dynamics and chaos and complexity theory, among others. Of the key principles of systems thinking, Meadows & Wright (2008), Morgan (2005) and Senge (2006) agree that systems are about both the whole and its parts. To this end, Morgan (2005) presents the view that nothing is objective because it is dependent on the perspective taken within a system. Morgan (2005) also asserts that no single actor can view that whole system and to see the whole, and there must be engagement with various participants from different parts of the system.

The literature presents other dimensions core to systems thinking such as process and information flows and time. Meadows & Wright (2008) present that the interrelationships between parts of a system can be simplified to process and information flows. Morgan (2005) cautions against oversimplifying because this can lead to reductionism. Meadows & Wright (2008) also state the exchange of information between parts of a system is what creates behaviour. Senge (2006) notes that a delay in these signals creates space for common system behaviours, system archetypes, to emerge. The literature classifies delay as part of the time dimension of systems thinking (Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015).

In summary, Morgan (2005) succinctly presents that systems thinking is fundamentally about interrelationships and interdependence and the awareness of those connections.

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### SYSTEM ARCHETYPES

Throughout the literature on systems thinking is the concept of system archetypes. Many scholars define system archetypes as common system behaviours (Meadows & Wright, 2008; Morgan, 2005; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015). Meadows & Wright, (2008), Morgan (2005), Senge (2006) and Stroh (2015) stress that these dynamics are in place often because of a lack of awareness of how actions within a system have impact. Senge (2006) notes that being able to identify these behaviours is the first step to understanding and managing them for the system's benefit, not detriment. While human instincts can often maintain or exacerbate these archetypes and their impacts, both Meadows & Wright (2008) and Senge (2006) note there are intervention points for each of these archetypes to alleviate or remedy their effects. A summary of these archetypes is available in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of System Archetypes

Archetype	Description	Source
<b>Vicious / virtuous cycles</b> (also known as "Runaway loops" or "reinforcing feedback loops" or "amplifying feedback loops")	Feedback processes that generate growth or acceleration, either to abundance or decline.	(Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015)
<b>Balancing process</b> (also known as "stabilizing loop")	Feedback processes operating in pursuit of a goal that find a point of equilibrium.	(Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015)
<b>Fixes that fail</b> (also known as "Fixes that backfire" or "Policy resistance")	When a system has different actors pursuing different goals, the system becomes resistant to change and results in unintended consequences.	(Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015)
<b>Shifting the burden</b> (also known as "Addiction")	An underlying problem creates symptoms that draw attention from the root cause. Attention is then given to quick fixes for the symptoms not the underlying problem.	(Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015)
<b>Limits to growth</b>	A reinforcing process that creates success to a limit.	(Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015)
<b>Success to the successful</b> (also known as "Competitive exclusion")	When previous success leads to future success, and previous failure inhibits future success.	(Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015)
<b>Accidental adversaries</b>	When actors within a system act for their own benefit without recognition of the impact to others, they can inadvertently create competition or obstruct others within the system.	(Stroh, 2015)
<b>Eroding Goals</b> (also known as "Drift to low performance" or "drifting goals")	A reinforcing process when goals are lowered because of perceived system performance. Over time the original goal is lost.	(Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015)
<b>Competing goals</b>	The presence of too many or conflicting goals reducing the ability of the system to achieve any goals.	(Stroh, 2015)
<b>Escalation</b>	A reinforcing loop that increases impacts exponentially between actors and creates competition.	(Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015)
<b>Tragedy of the Commons</b>	When shared resources are depleted because of the pursuit of individual benefit over collective benefit.	(Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015)
<b>Growth and underinvestment</b> (also known as "self-fulfilling prophecy")	Underinvestment leads to lower growth which leads to less investment in the future.	(Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015)
<b>Rule beating</b>	"Evasive action to get around the intent of a system's rules – abiding by the letter, but not the spirit, of the law."	(Meadows & Wright, 2008)
<b>Seeking the wrong goal</b>	When goals are not properly defined they can lead to unintended or unwanted results.	(Meadows & Wright, 2008)

Stroh (2015) notes that an example of a system archetype within the nonprofit sector is the archetype of “accidental adversaries”. The author further states that within the nonprofit sector there often exists similar organizations that share visions but lack coordination in execution of program delivery. Stroh (2015) states as a result of this archetype, organizations can often work against each other and undermine their shared goals by eroding limited and constrained resources.

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## SYSTEMS CHANGE AND SHARED VISION

Meadows & Wright (2008) offer a list of leverage points within a system to create systems change. Of the highest forms of leverage on that list, Meadows & Wright (2008) propose two of the most powerful leverage points are through goals and paradigms. Senge (2006) supports the concept of a shared vision (or goal) and paradigms (or mental models) within a system possessing high leverage to change or alter system behaviour. Senge (2006) also refers to dynamic complexity when small or subtle actions create large impacts over time. Hickman et al. (2009) discuss the importance of understanding the full system and not just minute subsets of a system in relation to change leadership. Due to system complexity, Hickman et al. (2009) caution against too small a systems lens because it can obscure larger system behaviours and patterns that may not be apparent at more micro levels.

For any system, the literature argues that possessing a shared vision is the foundation for effective system dynamics (Baggetta, 2009; Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015). Senge (2006) and Stroh (2015) identify a shared vision is one of the first steps to aligning organizations within a system and to conducting an evaluation of systems archetypes at play. Ife (2013) maintains visions are also central drivers for action within community development change efforts.

The literature proposes this because at the core of system dynamics is the belief that systems possess an inherent purpose that is reinforced by systems behaviour (Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006). Meadows & Wright (2008) and Senge (2006) also state that goals drive behaviour within systems, and often losing sight of the system's purpose and its goal is a primary reason for unintended systems behaviour.

Looking at nested systems such as organizations, Burke (2014) notes having a shared vision is also a critical success factor within any interorganizational change. Burke (2014) also states interorganizational change is at play during collaborations as organizations are often asked to find common ground, which may mean giving or receiving more than they initially desired. This is supported by other literature reviewed as Bryson et al. (2006) note shared visions are sometimes beneficial pre-conditions to collaboration, which is discussed further in a following section of the literature review.

In the absence of a shared vision, the literature states that organizations are left in a dynamic of competition and can fall to system archetypes such as escalation and eroding goals, among others (Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015).

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## CONNECTING SYSTEMS THINKING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The literature on systems thinking and community development points to the inherent complexity of any system. For example, both Auspos & Cabaj (2014) and Waddell et al. (2015) argue that the complexity of systems can exist in multiple scales, both horizontally

in terms of breadth of scope and vertically in terms of depth. These multiple levels of system depth, often referred to as nested systems, are important to consider as well (Auspos & Cabaj, 2014). Like in organizational change, both Burke (2014) and Waddell et al. (2015) argue systems change happens at multiple levels.

To visualize these systems, Stroh (2015) asserts the use of systems mapping and design within community development is one of the ways communities can begin to build understanding of the environment they operate in and how different actions produce intended and unintended consequences. Stroh (2015) also states that by mapping a system, system archetypes and dynamics can be articulated which can lead to fruitful conversations about leverage points within a system. Senge (2006) adds that through mapping, mental models that influence decisions and actions within the system can be surfaced. Both Morgan (2005) and Waddell et al. (2015) stress that awareness of these models and the need for systems change is essential for change to occur.

## COLLABORATION

Foundational to understanding and responding to the research question posed in this Master's Project is an understanding of collaboration and what collaboration could mean and look like in the context of the WGA and the writing community in Alberta. Scholarly literature defines collaboration as the act of co-labouring, where two or more organizations work together to achieve a shared goal (Le Pennec & Raufflet, 2018; McLaughlin, 2010). In this section of literature review, perspectives on types of interorganizational collaboration, motivations for collaboration and degrees of collaboration are discussed.

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## INTERORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION

Interorganizational collaboration can be examined and understood from multiple perspectives. For example, literature is focused on different segments of the interorganizational collaboration journey including pre-conditions and governance structures (e.g., Cornforth et al., 2015), motivations (e.g., Gray & Stites, 2013; Le Pennec & Raufflet, 2018; McLaughlin, 2010; Shumate et al., 2018), and natures of collaborations (e.g., (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b, 2012a; Gray & Stites, 2013; McLaughlin, 2010).

Takahashi and Smutny (2002) cited in Cornforth et al. (2015), propose that a collaboration window opens when five streams converge: a problem stream, a policy stream, a political stream, an organizational stream, and a temporal stream. Cornforth et al. (2015) explain each of these streams consist of interdependent environmental conditions that influence the success of interorganizational collaboration efforts.

Additionally, Cornforth et al. (2015) discuss the governance implications of interorganizational collaborations. Specifically, Cornforth et al. (2015) argue that governance structures differ between individual organizations and the governance required for interorganizational collaborations. This difference is credited to an absence of clear leader in the collaborative governance structure (Cornforth et al., 2015). An additional role presented by Cornforth et al. (2015) is the role of collaborative entrepreneurs, defined as the role of those who work across organizational boundaries to identify solutions to problems. These roles imply active participation and Waddell et al. (2015) note that collaborations seeking to co-create change are often co-evolving and require a willingness from everyone to change.

Relevant to this Master's Project is cross-sector collaboration. Cross-sector collaboration is defined as including at least two of the following four types of organizations: business, non-governmental organizations, government, and communities (Bryson et al., 2006; Gray & Stites, 2013; Shumate et al., 2018). Cross-sector collaborations, as described by Bryson et al. (2006), often respond to societal problems not easily addressed by one sector alone however, the literature clearly states that cross-sector collaboration is not always the best solution. Bryson et al. (2006) caution against a reliance on collaboration to solve issues because of the "interconnectedness of things" (p.44), where changes can have unpredictable and unexpected impacts within a system.

## MOTIVATIONS FOR COLLABORATION

Bryson et al. (2006) notes that in a shared-power world, few organizations have sole power or responsibility over public challenges. Literature on motivations for collaboration suggest there are a variety of motivations to spur interest in interorganizational collaboration. These motivations can include resources (Gray & Stites, 2013; Shumate et al., 2018), management competencies (Shumate et al., 2018), knowledge creation (Shumate et al., 2018), and legitimacy (Bryson et al., 2006; Gray & Stites, 2013). McLaughlin (2010) also argues that integrated service delivery as a primary motive for entertaining mergers and alliances between non-profit organizations in the US. By streamlining processes and services, it creates efficiency for the customer and maximizes the use of capital, be it financial, human, social or political. For integrated service delivery to occur, McLaughlin (2010) argues four elements that will be present include: trust, information as a strategic tool, investment in information technology, and standardized services.

MOTIVATIONS	LEGITIMACY-ORIENTED	COMPETENCY-ORIENTED	RESOURCE-ORIENTED	SOCIETY-ORIENTED
NGOs	Building reputation, image and branding	Acquiring complementary capabilities, such as technical and managerial skills	Gaining access to networks and to business and political leaders	Influencing social and environmental change in businesses, industries and society
	Maximizing sphere of impact and garnering wider support		Reducing costs	Building public awareness of issues
	Becoming a more prominent actor		Securing monetary funding	Making the world better by solving problems
	<b>Responding to demands for accountability</b>		Gaining goods, services and volunteers	

\*Black text signifies primarily proactive motivations, whereas **bolded text signifies primarily reactive motivations.**

**Figure 1 NGO Motivations for Partnering (Gray & Stites, 2013)**

While there are many reasons and motivations for organizations to collaborate, Le Pennec & Raufflet (2018) place the concept of value creation at the core of current research. For example, while there may be collaboration for collaboration's sake, most collaboration is seeking a type of value as output from the interaction.

In the case of the capacity-improvement seeking collaborations or competency-oriented (Gray & Stites, 2013), Shumate et al. (2018) examine the relationship between types of interorganizational collaboration networks in place and their effect on non-profit capacity. Their results identified that the type of network portfolio did not impact the overall capacity level of the non-profit nor did capacity act as a moderator for relationships within a network. Instead, there was a direct relationship between capacities. The duration of

partnerships and collaboration was positively correlated to capacity for government-nonprofit relationships and not those with businesses. The overall position from Shumate et al. (2018) is to proceed with caution when recommending collaboration as a means of improving non-profit management capacity, as their research does not support this motivation and outcome. In contrast, Le Pennec & Raufflet (2018) identify value in collaboration from a community capacity building perspective and demonstrated value in personal confidence and skills like conflict management and the ability to work well with others (Shumate et al., 2018).

## NATURE AND DEGREE OF COLLABORATION

Regardless of motivation, McLaughlin (2010) notes that most collaboration begins in an organic, informal way, in the presence of growing mutual interest. As noted in the literature, collaboration can happen at many different levels for organizations and to different degrees of integration (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b, 2012a; Le Pennec & Raufflet, 2018; McLaughlin, 2010). The C.O.R.E. Continuum of Collaboration describes these levels in terms of corporate, operations, responsibility and economic, shown in Figure 2 and defined in Table 2.

Table 2 Degrees of Integration (McLaughlin, 2010).

Degree of Integration	Description
<b>Economic</b>	Includes sharing of information, joint bidding or purchasing
<b>Responsibility</b>	Includes sharing administrative resources and functions such as accounting, human resources, information technology and property management.
<b>Operations</b>	Includes shared training, joint programming, and joint quality standards
<b>Corporate Structure</b>	Includes merged corporate structures such as governance and administrative leadership. Where there were multiple organizations before, after there is only one.

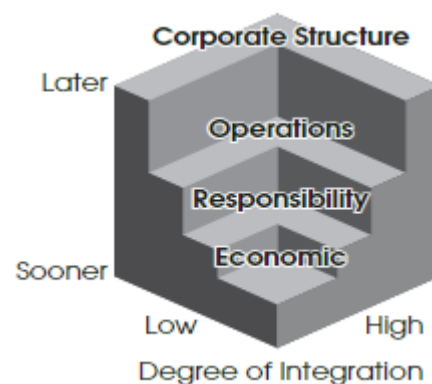


Figure 2 C.O.R.E. Continuum of Collaboration (McLaughlin, 2010).

What becomes important to understand from McLaughlin's (2010) continuum is that sometimes organizations can become so close-knit and ingrained through collaboration that they become a single entity. Within McLaughlin's (2010) continuum it is also noted that there are more forms of collaboration where organizational identity and independence is maintained and that collaboration is not always synonymous with mergers.

Similarly to the continuum of collaboration, Austin & Seitanidi (2012a, 2012b) propose a Collaborative Value Creation (CVC) framework that describe the different degrees of collaboration and the types of values that are commonly produced through effective collaboration. Le Pennec & Raufflet (2018) graphically depict a portion of this framework in Figure 3. The types of collaborative relationships include:

- Associational: meaning value is received from a collaborative relationship,
- Transferred: meaning value is received from sharing of resources and assets,

- Interactional: meaning value is received from intangibles such as trust, shared learning, knowledge creation or market intelligence, and
- Synergistic: meaning value is received through combined effort and resources, innovation, societal changes (Le Penne & Raufflet, 2018).

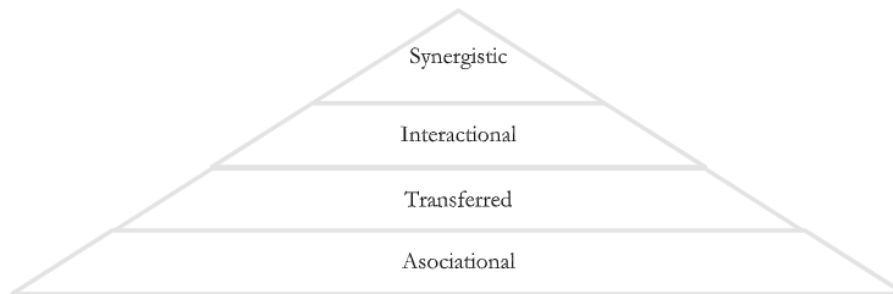


Figure 3 The pyramid of value creation in inter-organizational collaborations (Le Penne & Raufflet, 2018)

## STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

### APPROACHES TO STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

According to the literature, understanding stakeholder relationships is foundational to working collaboratively. According to Kivits & Sawang (2021), stakeholder theory centers around finding efficiency in relationships to reach performance goals. A stakeholder is defined as a person or organization that is affected or can affect an issue (Hester & Adams, 2017; Mitchell et al., 1997; Stroh, 2015).

From a systems perspective, Stroh (2015) highlights the importance of stakeholders because they are the actors within the system and a diversity of stakeholders is needed for systems change and innovation. Both Mitchell et al. (1997) and Rowley (1997) acknowledge that approaches to identifying stakeholders navigate tension between two philosophies: a direct relationship between parties, referred to as narrow-view, and a broad-view that incorporates almost anyone. The literature recommends deciding on a stakeholder analysis philosophy, as each philosophy contains its strengths and challenges. For example, Mitchell et al. (1997) note that broad-view approaches tend to be complex and all encompassing, whereas narrow-view approaches tend to be more reflective of practical realities such as limited resources. Another consideration presented by Rowley (1997) relates to the importance of networks within stakeholder analysis: because organizations do not exist in a vacuum and neither do stakeholders. Rowley (1997) writes that “the focal organization is more than simply the central point of its own stakeholders: it is also a stakeholder of many other focal points in its relevant social system” (p. 892).

Once identified, Hester & Adams (2017) and Stroh (2015) remind us it is important to map stakeholders to understand the degree to which they are affected or can affect the system. There are a variety of methods across literature. These methods have been summarized in Table 3 **Error! Reference source not found.** Hester & Adams (2017) point out the most comprehensive of these methods is the Prominence-Support Grid because it combines the strengths of the stakeholder typology and stakeholder attitude characterization.

Table 3 Summary of Stakeholder Analysis Methods

Method	Description	Source	Visual
<b>Stakeholder Typology</b>	Mapping stakeholder based on the combination of attributes across power, legitimacy, and urgency.	(Mitchell et al., 1997)  (Mitchell et al., 1997 cited in Hester & Adams, 2017)	
<b>Stakeholder attitude characterization</b>	Assessing stakeholder attitude on two characteristics: potential for threat and potential for cooperation.	(Savage et al., 1991) as cited in Hester & Adams, 2017	
<b>Continuum of stakeholder involvement</b>	Classification of stakeholders based on available strategies of involvement including: no action, monitor, defend, collaborate and involve.	(Hester et al., 2012) as cited in Hester & Adams, 2017	
<b>Power-Interest Grid</b>		(Mendelow, 1991); (Eden & Ackermann, 1998)  As cited in Hester & Adams, 2017	

**Prominence-support grid**

Combining aspects of both the Power-Interest grid and the Stakeholder attitude characterization grid, the prominence-support grid incorporates action strategies from stakeholder management into the analysis, thereby connecting to a stakeholder journey and presenting a path to stakeholder transformation.

(Hester & Adams, 2017)

		<i>Prominence<sub>i</sub></i>	
		0	1
<i>Support<sub>i</sub></i>	+1	Collaborate	Involve
	0	No action	Monitor
	-1	Monitor	Defend

## LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY

Overall, the literature review has identified a gap in scholarly literature relating to writing communities and their organizations. In order to examine the concepts of systems thinking and community development in relation to Alberta's writing community, general nonprofit organizations have been used in lieu of sector specific research and literature.

The literature review also suggests that organizations do not exist in silos therefore a broader look at the entire system is often beneficial when examining a single organization. Communities, as systems, are also subject to system dynamics therefore system archetypes can be examined to understand inherit systemic challenges that form the environment nonprofit organizations, like the WGA operate within. These archetypes can help or hinder the development of writers in Alberta. Additionally, communities and healthy systems are developed often through shared visions. Shared visions also form part of collaboration.

The literature regarding collaboration states that collaboration happens at different levels and organizations often have specific motivations for collaboration, which can impact how they may choose to interact or partner with other organizations. It also shows that collaboration is often lived on a continuum and can look different depending on many factors such as degrees of collaboration and value sought through collaboration. Fundamentally, collaboration is shared purpose and work between two or more organizations. For this reason, it is important to also understand who those partners are and the status of relationships.

Lastly, the literature suggests that stakeholder analysis is a foundational tool to classifying relationships and managing them. Through a stakeholder analysis, organizations can be identified, and strong relationships can be leveraged for shared benefit while weaker relationships can be improved through targeted effort. Understanding the level of impact that specific relationships have can also inform actions and improvement efforts.

Conceptual Framework: Aspect	Secondary Questions	Literature Review Topic
<b>Understanding Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What role does the WGA currently play within the writing community in Alberta?</li> <li>• Are there programs or services the WGA should cease to deliver because they are better aligned with other organizations and their mandates than with the WGA's role and mandate?</li> </ul>	Systems Thinking and Change  Collaboration
<b>Understanding Interactions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which organizations support the WGA's current role?</li> <li>• Which organizations compete with the WGA in its current role?</li> </ul>	Stakeholder analysis

<b>Understanding Motivations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where are leverage points within the system that can help strengthen the WGA's role in Alberta?</li><li>• How best does the WGA maintain its competitive advantage as Alberta's primary arts service organization focused on writing and literary arts?</li></ul>	Systems Thinking and Change  Collaboration
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## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

### INTRODUCTION

The methodology and methods chapter provides an overview of the approaches and methods used to undertake this research.

The methodology section describes the overarching approaches used in this research, which is then further defined by the conceptual framework. The methods section then puts these ideas into action by articulating how data was collected and analysed to answer the research question.

This project received ethics approval by the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board on October 28, 2022, Protocol #22-0566.

### METHODOLOGY

For this research project, a systems design approach was taken. A systems design approach is an exercise that documents relationships and information flows for analysis. A systems design approach allows the articulation of the existing system and provides an opportunity to examine it for leverage points, relationships, and feedback loops (Stroh, 2015). Researching complex systems, like the writing community in Alberta, leads to a more nuanced examination of the environment and build a stronger foundation for decision making when using the systems design approach (*Researching complex systems using participatory systems mapping*, 2019).

This primary methodology is supported by a stakeholder analysis as a secondary methodology. A stakeholder analysis is an exercise where stakeholders are examined and assessed based on specific criteria. (Hester & Adams, 2017). Utilizing a stakeholder analysis approach as a secondary methodology provided additional context and depth to the findings from the systems design approach (*Researching complex systems using participatory systems mapping*, 2019). Aspects of depth include relationship dynamics, power relationships and common goals and challenges within the system. These forms of analysis also worked to validate any assumptions made in the interpretation of the systems map to guard against biases.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework engaged three aspects of systems to respond to the research question for this project. They are:

- Understanding the identity of the organization being interviewed to determine its purpose aims, and connections.
- Understanding interactions specifically with the WGA by the organization and other organizations, and
- Understanding motivations to determine leverage points, success factors and underpinning systems philosophies (success amplification or goal achievement).

In each aspect, additional attributes have been identified to develop each aspect in more detail.

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### UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY - WHO IS THE ORGANIZATION?

The purpose of this aspect was to determine the purpose, aims and connections of existing organizations to analyse areas of common interest, overlap in services and membership, and identify any areas of conflict or competition.

Attributes that were identified include:

- Purpose and focus of organization,
- Services provided by the organization,
- Membership (if any) of the organization and who can access services provided, and
- Funding structure of the organization.

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### UNDERSTANDING INTERACTIONS – WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP TO THE WGA?

The purpose of this aspect was to determine the existing relationship between the organization and the WGA. This was used to further develop any connections and understand the current state of the connection.

Attributes that were identified include:

- Connections to other organizations,
- Expectations of the WGA within the system,
- Effectiveness of the WGA (perception within the system), and
- Feedback loops.

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### UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATIONS – WHAT ASPIRATIONS EXIST FOR GOING FORWARD?

The purpose of this aspect was to determine any opportunities or challenges perceived by the organization as it relates to the writing community in Alberta and how the organization engages within the system.

Attributes that were identified include:

- Success amplification or goal achievement philosophies,
- Potential leverage points, and
- System success factors.

By examining these aspects, systems maps were drawn to describe Alberta's writing community. Recommendations for the WGA and how it may consider changing its role within this system were developed and included in Chapter 6: Recommendations.

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## METHODS

The methodologies of this research project utilised various methods, including:

1. Key Informant, Semi-structured Interviews
2. Stakeholder Analysis
3. Systems Map

Through these interviews, both external and internal perspectives were collected and the system was defined and analysed through a stakeholder analysis and system-mapping. Findings from the analysis of all information collected and reviewed were used to formulate recommendations for the WGA's consideration. Because of the nature of the methods used, information collected is primarily qualitative in nature.

## INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted with stakeholders to best understand and define the WGA system. Semi-structured interviews use prepared interview scripts but allow for organic conversations and a flexible approach to interviewing (Olsen, 2012). Key informant interviews are commonly used to leverage key partners within a community to gain insight, frame issues and develop recommendations (BetterEvaluation, 2022). For this Master's Project, stakeholders were identified in three groups: (1) WGA staff, (2) Government and non-governmental organizations, and (3) Collaborative/competitive organizations at the national, provincial, and local/regional levels (further defined in Table 4 Participant Group Descriptions).

In the ethics form, it stated that the goal was to interview a minimum of two (2) participants from each group for a total of 10 interviews and a maximum of 15 interviews were to be conducted. To support this interview approach, two defined interview scripts were developed: one for WGA staff, and one for stakeholders external to the WGA, namely Groups 2 and 3.

**Table 4 Participant Group Descriptions**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1</b>	Writers' Guild of Alberta Staff
<b>2</b>	Government and non-governmental organizations
<b>3a</b>	Collaborative/Competitive organizations: National
<b>3b</b>	Collaborative/Competitive organizations: Provincial
<b>3c</b>	Collaborative/Competitive organizations: Local/Regional

Prior to recruiting participants, organizations were scanned for potential participants on their staff, based on information on the organization's website. Participants were identified by their roles. Preference for recruitment was given to organizational staff in areas of program delivery, grant coordination, or general administration (such as Executive Directors). If none of the staff were available to participate, board members were eligible to participate. In the case of the WGA, the Executive Director was not approached to participate because she is the client for this research.

To recruit participants, the researcher used email and telephone as the initial contact and followed up with an emailed Participant Recruitment Guide if the participant was interested in participating. Upon contact, the researcher relied on the organization's recommendation in terms of who was appropriate to participate from their perspective and given the nature of the interview questions. Interviews were scheduled virtually and conducted through Zoom given the variety of locations of the proposed participants. This assisted in keeping

the interview environment consistent across all interviews. All interviews were transcribed for analysis. Transcripts were initially auto generated through Zoom using the Live Transcript feature. All interviews were also recorded with participant permission for use in cleaning auto-generated transcripts. These transcripts were then manually cleaned using audio recordings from the interviews prior to any analysis being conducted.

As noted in the interview scripts, participants had the opportunity to provide or rescind consent to participate in this research at any time before, during, and after the interview took place. As of writing of this report, no participant chose to rescind consent to participate following the interview process.

Interviews were conducted from November 16, 2022 to December 19, 2022. A total of 11 interviews were conducted across all participant groups. A more detailed discussion and analysis of participant recruitment and participation can be found below.

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### NOTES ON RECRUITMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Through the participant recruitment process there was a notable finding when it came to participant group 3a: National organizations. Of the five (5) organizations contacted and invited to participate, only one (1) organization chose to accept the invitation. Of the remaining four (4) organizations, one (1) did not respond and the other three (3) organizations did not feel they met the criteria to participate or had anything of substance to contribute on the topic. A summary of participants by group is available in Table 5, below.

**Table 5 Recruitment Summary, by Participant Group**

Group	Number of Potential Participants	Number of Invitations Sent	Number of Actual Participants	Group Recruitment Status
1	3	3	3	Maximum Met
2	6	6	3	Maximum Met
3a	10	7	1	NEED MORE PARTICIPANTS
3b	6	5	2	Minimum Met
3c	8	7	2	Minimum Met
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Minimum Met</b>

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### THEMATIC ANALYSIS

A thematic analysis is a simple analysis method to identify similar and differing perspectives from participant responses (Nowell et al., 2017). It is also useful in generating insights and findings (Nowell et al., 2017). A combination of inductive and deductive coding was used to code interview transcripts and identify themes. Deductive coding was used to capture responses into categories, such as revenue sources (ex: grants, membership fees, fees for service, etc.) or evidence of system archetypes. Most of the coding was completed inductively.

Codes were then used to inform Chapter 4: Findings. Results from the data analysis were included in the interview findings section. Themes were then identified in relation to the questions and summary of findings for the questions.

Themes were then used to conduct the stakeholder analysis. They were also used to identify system archetypes and systemic relationships to draw the system maps.

As a result of these methods recommendations were identified.

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## STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Upon completion of the stakeholder and staff interviews, a stakeholder analysis was conducted to understand similarities and differences amongst stakeholders. While an alternative approach to mapping the stakeholders is the actor map (FSG, n.d.), a traditional stakeholder analysis was determined to be an appropriate method because of its common use and ease of implementation after the research was complete. Many stakeholder analysis methods are easily transitioned into stakeholder management plans, such as the method chosen in this research design.

Based on the literature reviewed, the researcher chose to use the Prominence-Support grid from Hester & Adams (2017). This approach was chosen because the Prominence-Support grid takes into consideration the prominence of a stakeholder (legitimacy, urgency and power) as well as the direction of support it has for the WGA. This type of stakeholder analysis also seamlessly integrates into the development of a stakeholder management plan, should the client decide to undertake this type of work in the future.

This analysis assisted in examining the relationships between organizations and creating systems maps. Any resulting themes were used to develop recommendations.

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## SYSTEMS MAP

A system map of Alberta's writing community was constructed following the interviews and stakeholder analysis methods above. Initially, a map was drawn to depict the WGA's environment and goals. Findings from the literature review and a review of background documents provided by the client will further inform the systems maps.

Using the stakeholder information gathered and analysed, additional maps were drawn to build out the complexity within the system. This approach helped clearly articulate the complexities within the system and aided in creating a broader understanding of impacts within the system (Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015).

The maps were then analysed for leverage points, feedback loops and system archetypes.

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## DATA ANALYSIS

A separate Microsoft Excel workbook was used to track participant information and keys. All responses were analysed using participant IDs (primary keys) to maintain a degree of anonymity as some participants requested to remain as anonymous as possible.

Interview transcripts were imported into Microsoft Excel and separated into sheets based on questions. All responses were coded back to participant IDs so that the context of

responses could be validated against other question responses from the same participant if necessary. A secondary column was appended to the responses to code and identify themes. In some cases, tables were developed to understand similarities in responses, such as for questions 1 and 3.

Where responses were lengthy or secondary questions derived significant responses, responses were separated into separate worksheets for analysis.

Where numerical information had been gathered, numerical data was separated into separate cells so that it could be calculated for descriptive statistics. Basic statistical analysis was done for questions 7/8 and 8/9 using Excel formulas. Basic statistics were calculated once for all responses, and a second time separating out staff and stakeholder responses. This approach allowed the researcher to gauge alignment in perceptions from staff and stakeholders.

Representative quotes of findings were pulled from participant transcripts to illustrate evidence of the finding. Original text is highlighted in the data analysis workbook. Some minor edits were made for clarity and brevity. This is demonstrated by the use of square brackets where text has been replaced, or the use of ellipses where superfluous commentary was removed. Colloquial filler words were reduced to improve overall clarity as well. The overall intent of quotes remains representative of participant transcripts.

To identify trends and visualize quantitative data, charts were built in Microsoft Excel from summary tables.

The outputs of this approach to data analysis can be found in Chapter 4: Findings.

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## PROJECT LIMITATIONS

This research is limited by the participation of stakeholders. The primary building block for the stakeholder analysis and creation of system maps are the transcripts and findings of the key informant interviews. Following the interview process, all deliverables and recommendations developed for this project are dependent on the quality of participation from participants.

This project is a snap-shot in time and is reflective of staff and stakeholder perspectives and relationships between November and December 2022. Any developments or changes in perspectives or relationships post-2022 will not be incorporated in this project report or considered in scope of this project.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### INTRODUCTION

The findings of this report are a result of staff and stakeholder interviews conducted between November 16 and December 19, 2022. A thematic analysis and subsequent stakeholder analysis and analysis of system maps contributed to the development of findings in this report.

This chapter begins with the interview findings, moves to the stakeholder analysis and then presents the systems maps.

### INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The interview scripts contained a total of three (3) aspects in alignment with the conceptual framework and a closing section of questions. WGA staff interviews contained a total of fifteen (15) questions with probing questions as required. Stakeholder interviews contained one additional question (in Aspect 2: Understanding Interactions). The following section reviews question findings in sequential order and identifies themes among responses.

#### ASPECT 1: UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY

The first five (5) questions of the interviews focused on understanding the purpose, aims, and connections of existing organizations to be able to analyse areas of common interest, overlap in services and membership and identify any areas of conflict or competition.

#### THEME 1: WRITING ORGANIZATIONS IDENTIFY SIMILAR PURPOSES AND AUDIENCES

Question 1 asked participants about their role and the role of their organization within the writing community in Alberta. Most participants were either in Program and Event positions (46%) or were the Executive Directors for their organization (36%), Figure 4. Other positions were related to granting (18%). Reported roles of organizations are summarized in Figure 5.

The majority of organizations have also been in operations since 1989 (55%), as seen in Figure 6. The oldest participant organization has been in operating since 1921 (Participant 5).

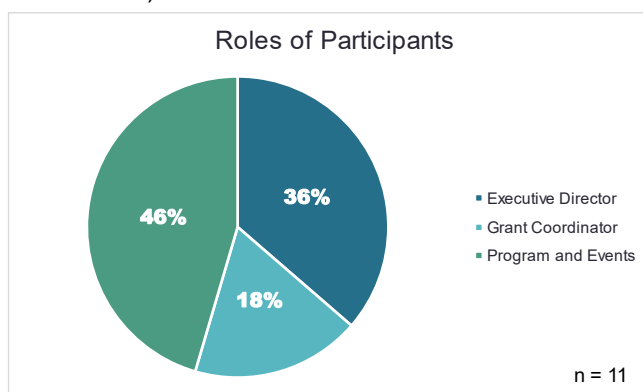


Figure 4 Roles of Participants

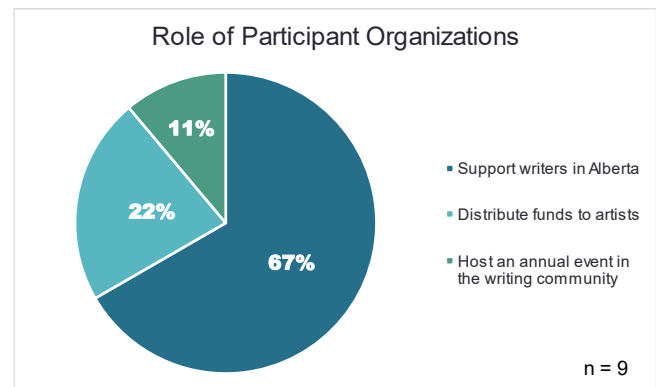


Figure 5 Role of Participant Organizations

Question 2 inquired about primary members and audiences of organizations. Participants identified common members and audiences including emerging and professional writers, and more broadly as all writers, from all writing genres. Some participants identified more specific writing audiences such as playwrights, poets, or writers being published in magazines. Audiences that were not writing specific included the general public, citizens of respective cities, taxpayers, and arts organizations. Non-writing specific audiences were generally identified by Group 2 participants.

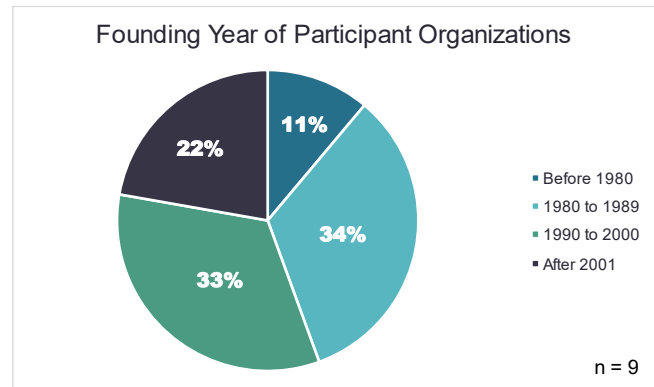


Figure 6 Founding Year of Participant Organizations

### PARTICIPANT QUOTES

*We wouldn't turn anyone away. You do not have to be a published writer; you can be a hobbyist. You can be just starting out. (Participant 2)*

*We are very similar to the Writers' Guild of Alberta because we are there to provide support and develop professional development opportunities for writers, both our own members, and when possible, people who are not members. (...) We are open to aspiring, emerging and professional authors. Our sort of logo has been "writers helping writers since 1921" so that the professional you know sort of help, mentor. Especially when we had face to face meetings, there was a lot of informal mentoring happening from that, but not so much anymore. As I said, all genres as well. (Participant 5)*

*It's people trying to learn craft and be better at craft, and they want to get published, and you know, so we help them along that whole journey from initial idea. (Participant 6)*

## THEME 2: WRITING ORGANIZATIONS SHARE SIMILAR FUNDING SOURCES

Question 3 examined the funding structures of the participants organization, including primary sources of funding, collection of fees for membership or service and receipt of grant funding. The most common source of funding was grant funding from national, provincial and local funding sources (89% of participant organizations, all but one organization). A notable finding is that fundraising revenue from charitable gaming casinos is considered a common method in Alberta, however this is not standard revenue for organizations across Canada (Participant 5).

Question 4 sought to understand the ease of access to grant funding for literary arts and specifically what types of grants were received or dispensed, the stability and sufficiency of that funding, and any community interest in funding that was not currently available.

Participants noted:

- Most grants are accessible only online.
- Supports are available to prepare applications.
- The current grant opportunities are stable however, some grant opportunities are restrictive.
  - The most stable level of grant funding is found at the municipal/local level with less certainty at the provincial and federal levels.
- The most sought-after grant opportunity was for operating grants.
- Project based grants only support one-time ideas and are not useful when establishing new programs in arts organizations.
- It is perceived to be easier to get grants if you have already received them. This is also the case when an organization wishes to grow the amount of grant dollars received.

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### THEME 3: WRITING ORGANIZATIONS SHARE SIMILAR EXPENSE STRUCTURES

Question 5 asked about expenses of participant organizations and provided opportunities to discuss redistribution of funds and to examine financial relationships between organizations. The primary expense for organizations part of Group 1 and 3 were administration costs, such as salaries, office overhead, and programming. Group 2 organizations noted the majority of their budgets are allocated to granting. Most organizations provide subsidies, either directly to individuals or in-directly through subsidised services for members. Most organizations support awards and seek partnership opportunities to spread expenses across multiple organizations for larger events. Sponsorship was less common, with the most common being in-kind promotion such as advertising swaps in lieu of financial sponsorships.

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### ASPECT 2: UNDERSTANDING INTERACTIONS

Questions 6-12 for Stakeholder participants, and Questions 6-11 for WGA Staff, focused on determining relationships between the WGA and other organizations. Responses to these questions serve to further develop findings from Aspect 1 questions and inform a clearer understanding of the current state of relationships.

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### THEME 4: WRITING ORGANIZATIONS CO-EXIST VERSUS FULLY COLLABORATE

Question 6 provided an opportunity for participants to identify interactions with other organizations within the writing community. It focused on defining the type and nature of the relationship. While most participants classify their interactions and intentions with other organizations as collaborative, when asked to describe the relationships in more detail often participants describe more independent relationships that become collaborative in the face of uncertainty or operational constraints. They also identified specific stronger relationships while noting there are many organizations they have little or no relationship with. There does not appear to be any formal structure to connections between

organizations and existing connections are based likely on interpersonal relationships than interorganizational histories. Some participants noted overlaps in service however the perception of this overlap was not consistent. Some organizations were mindful of it and sought to reduce overlap through partnership while other organizations perceived the overlap as beneficial in the community.

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### PARTICIPANT QUOTES

*What we do do is we try not to overlap in terms of services that we provide. (...) There is such a scarcity of resources. One of the things that we really try and keep on top of is well, if somebody else is doing that, why would we get in the way? Or is there a way for us to partner on that that allows it to be bigger and better? (Participant 3)*

*So we'll reach out to an organization like that to see what their you know, speaker fees are and try to keep things in line with what's you know standard across the province so it's not really like a relationship where we're looking to see what they're offering, and then we offer the opposite. But it's really more of like that that shoulder. You know, like when we, when we have questions and and you know for example, a conference that we did a few years ago, we partnered with them to bring in. (Participant 7)*

*There's an overlap like I said. It's not like we're examining these other organizations, like their programming and then trying to offset that programming with their own programming. I think it's really, we do our own thing and we try to collaborate and partner, when and where we can. And I would definitely say, it's more collaborative than anything. That being said, we do, you know, operate our own organization with the expectation that we're doing our own thing. The other ones are doing their own thing. And you know a lot of the times I'm sure that overlaps. And like I said, we partner, when and where we can, and try to help each other out, when and where we can. (Participant 7)*

*We do have relationships with other organizations through one-time funding like the Project Grants. So, but in terms of kind of that deeper, longer relationship we'll, we'll say, about 10 [organizations]. (Participant 8)*

*Relationships are kind of hard to track because they are more interpersonal. (Participant 9)*

*Collaborative: we work, really hard to ensure that we're not overstepping on each other. (...) We have a shared spreadsheet where we talk about what programming we're offering and when we're offering so we don't conflict with each other. And then we, you know, we have overlapping interests so we partner, when we can and we give heads up and we take their insight. (Participant 11)*

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Question 7 was asked solely of stakeholder participants and sought to understand specific interactions between the participant organization and the WGA. It required the participant to classify the type of relationship between the two organizations and identify any redundancy or competition as well as assess perceived alignment of goals and services. Participants described some distance in the relationship between their organization and the WGA (Participants 3, 5, 6, 9, 11) from varying causes such as lack of institutional memory from turnover, or past misalignments in direction. When participants spoke about their relationship with the WGA, some spoke to an implicit leadership role expected from the WGA within the literary arts community. Generally, there was no perceived conflict between organizations, however there was a desire to have more formal relationships and planning discussions.



### PARTICIPANT QUOTES

*The Writer's Guild is really good with is those smaller, engaging community type events, right? They were always like really great for that in in Calgary so. And we struggled with that. So, I think that was one way that we started to complement one another. It's like building on the strengths that we have rather than trying to compete with one another, and that's always the philosophy I've tried to take. (...) We never really sat down and said, "Hey, like how can we work together?" And I've always wanted that (...) I wanted us to be able to, you know, complement each other, almost like we were one big organization serving everybody, right? Just to me, the Writers Guild was always more focused on professional writers, and advocacy. (Participant 6)*

*I think it's just that the Writer's Guild sets like a tasks standard for what how the Literary Community Engages with itself. (Participant 9)*

*(On competition) No, I don't think so, because while we do have an overlapping audience, our mandate is slightly different. So, I don't think we necessarily compete. We keep an eye to that to make sure that we can collaborate when possible. (Participant 11)*

#### Note on Question Numbering:

From Question 7 onwards, the number of questions between WGA Staff interviews and Stakeholder interviews are offset by one. Questions will be referred to as WGA staff question #/Stakeholder Question # going forward. As an example, the next question will be Question 7/8, meaning the seventh question for WGA staff, and the eighth question for Stakeholders.

### THEME 5: THE WGA NEEDS TO CONTINUE WORK ON INCLUSIVITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND AWARENESS

Question 7/8 assessed the perceived effectiveness of the WGA in meeting its mission statement on a scale of one to five, with 1 meaning “Not at all” and 5 meaning “Exceeds Expectations”. One participant declined to answer this question due to the relationship of their organization to the WGA. The remaining participants had a range of responses. WGA staff had consistent responses whereas stakeholder participant responses varied. The mean of all responses was 3.8, with the median being 4.0.

When participants were asked to reflect on their scores and identify any opportunities for improvement there was general sentiment of continuous improvement and most participants felt that they couldn't assign a “5” for the reason that there is always room for improvement (Participants 2, 7,11).

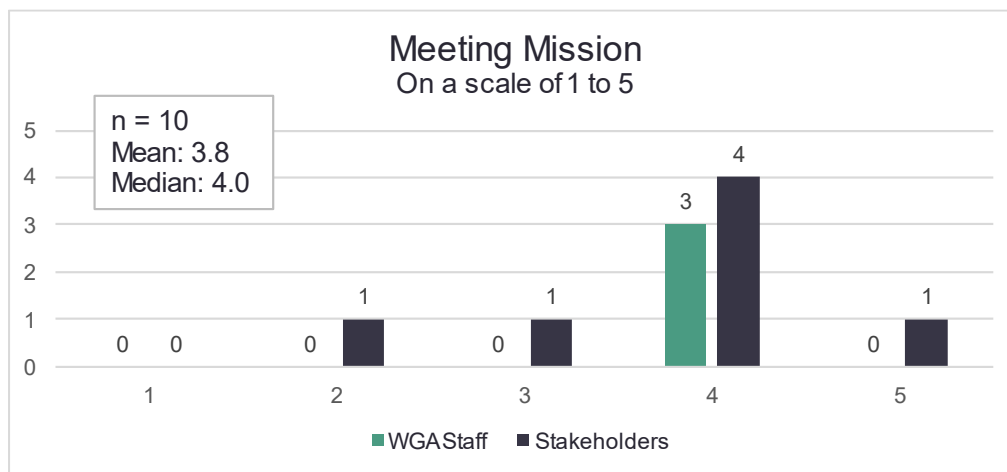


Figure 7 Perceived effectiveness of WGA Meeting its Mission (Question 7/8 results)

Question 8/9 assessed the perceived effectiveness of the WGA in pursuing its vision statement, with 1 meaning “Not at all” and 5 meaning “Exceeds Expectations”. One participant declined to answer this question due to the relationship of their organization to the WGA. Similarly to Question 7/8 results, WGA staff had consistent responses whereas there was more variation in scoring among stakeholders. The mean of all responses was 4.5, with a median of 5.0.

When participants elaborated on their score, responses included the strength of their ability to celebrate Alberta writers and local communities and their efforts towards diversity and inclusivity.

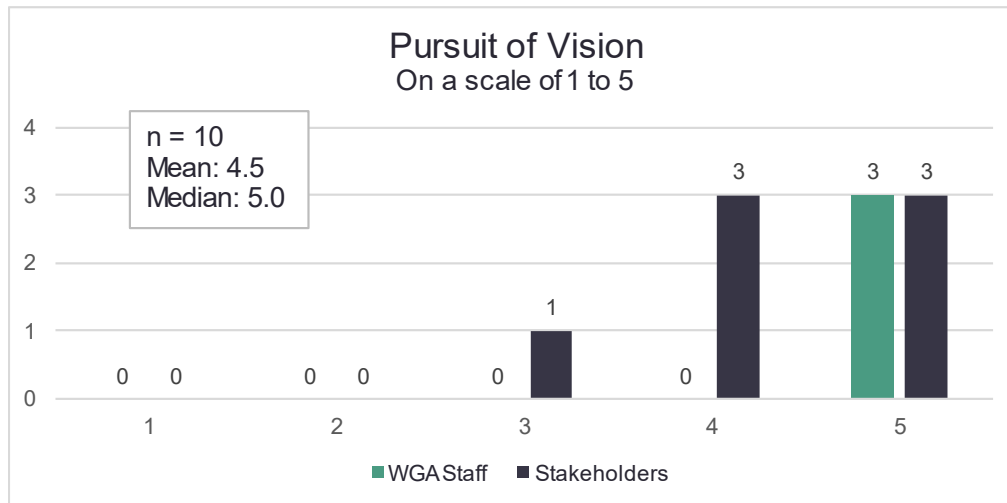


Figure 8 Perceived effectiveness of WGA in Pursuing its Vision (Question 8/9 results)

### PARTICIPANT QUOTES

*I think people that engage with us figure it out, and I think it's the people that don't know about us don't know what we can do. I still, think there's there are different barriers. Mostly, it's to people haven't interacted with us at all is the main problem. So, somebody that doesn't know us doesn't know what we can do for them. (Participant 1)*

*(On active engagement) I think [it] would go a long way toward getting people aware of that function of theirs and making that vision real for more than just the cannon of poets and writers in our province, but like everybody writing and whatever genre. And whatever iteration of whatever genre would have a sense of how to access the recognition. [Other writers] don't know what the Writers' Guild does. And they're also like a little bit wary, even though they might not need to be. (...) It makes more sense to invite people in and have that invitation manifest as material support, community recognition, and celebration of different writers, doing different things in different genres and bolstering their membership, in that way. (Participant 9)*

*We all can do more work towards diversity and amplifying diverse voices. But I think that [the WGA is] taking strides to do that. Both internally, and with the work that they promote, and who they hire for seminars, and so on. But I think, my only thing is we all need to do more work on that. (Participant 11)*

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 **PARTICIPANT QUOTES (cont'd)**

*One of the things that was happening in the past is meetings were held in a bar, or a place where drinks were available, and I have had several people say that whether they're older or whatever that they weren't comfortable going to meetings for that reason. Some of them were trying to avoid drinking, some of them just didn't like that kind of atmosphere, you know. (Participant 5)*

*So, with my interactions with the Writers' Guild, you know, when they're saying their mission is to support all writers, where I think they're lacking is the recognition of differing genres. And there is like this sense with the Writers Guild that it's very much "if you don't write literary, then you don't matter", right? (...) All writing should be recognized, no matter what it is right? So I think some genres are kind of left out. Yeah, if you're literary or you're writing memoir, you know anything like that: great, you know, the Writers' Guild is there. But if you're writing science fiction, or fantasy, or mystery, or romance like, there's not really a place for them within the Writers' Guild. (Participant 6)*

*I think accessibility continues to be a huge thing. For example, something that just came up is at our membership Christmas party. We had it at a venue that wasn't wheelchair accessible, so you know, like in this day and age, of course, there's this argument where like "how can that be?" But, it's also so hard to find venues in the city that that are accessible for everybody so there's this issue of Accessibility you know. We've purchased equipment recently, so that we can offer streaming and online content. That's just as good, as our in-person programming, but it's always gonna be a struggle to make sure that everybody feels like they have access to our stuff. So I think, accessibility is something that we continue to keep in mind. But it's just finding new ways, especially with the way things are changing and the way content is presented. I think it's just going to be a constant learning curve but that's good. It's good. It forces you to like, you know, rethink the narrative, and see what else you can bring to the table. (Participant 7)*

*I think sometimes--at least from my perspective--it's not always clear what level someone should be at when they're attending an event. Like, do you need to have been published already? Is it okay, that you are new to it? (Participant 11)*

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**THEME 6: WRITING ORGANIZATIONS HAVE SHARED ASPIRATIONS REGARDING THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WGA IN THE FUTURE**

Question 9/10 focused on articulating the future relationship between the WGA and other organizations. Stakeholder participants were asked to describe how they would like their relationship to be with the WGA and the WGA staff participants were asked to describe how they would like others to describe their relationship to the WGA.

WGA staff identified a desire to be seen as a community resource and a welcoming organization for all writers, no matter experience or genre.



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**PARTICIPANT QUOTES**

*I would like people to think of the Writers' Guild as a valuable resource, and a place where they can find community, and a place that kind of speaks up for them and a place where they can find different levels of support for their kind of career, and maybe for their community. (Participant 1)*

*I would love people to see it as a collective, a supportive and celebratory collective for writers. I want people to feel like they have the WGA on their side, and they can lean on the WGA, for you know their writing needs, and I just want to be a welcoming and inclusive partner for writers. (Participant 2)*

*I think inclusivity is the biggest thing. It's just people realizing that they're always welcome-- doesn't matter where you are in your literary journey, doesn't matter where you're from, how old you are, you know, like everybody is welcome. (Participant 7)*

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Granting organizations identified a desire to maintain existing relationships or form deeper working relationships with the WGA and other grant recipients. There are opportunities to strengthen the writing community through continued alignment and new research that can be leveraged by arts organizations.

Other arts organizations expressed desires for continued good relationships, partnerships and collaboration to build a stronger community for writers through shared goals and purpose. More integrated planning would help strengthen the community by identifying partnerships early and staying in constant communication.



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## PARTICIPANT QUOTES

*I think we are support organizations that support each other.  
(Participant 3)*

*I would like to see Canada's association having the sort of joint meetings of the different provinces across Canada. That's what I would like to see, and the I see the Writers' Guild being an active participant, in that. That would also provide writers with information about all the different resources there are across Canada as well as an opportunity to have joint projects that would benefit writers across Canada.  
(Participant 5)*

*I don't want to see us competing. (...) We're all working for the same goal, and we serve the same people, right? (...) The more we can work together and complement each other as opposed to trying to take... try to fight for the same market, like I don't think is reasonable in this kind of an industry, right? (...) We need to find our shared space.  
(Participant 6)*

*I think it's making the time on both of our ends to just talk about and make future plans together. (...) The more opportunities there are for writers to get their voices heard, to learn new skills, whether that's, you know, how to market yourself or how to submit or what have you, I think that would be beneficial. You know, the more people who read them, the more feedback they get, the more skill that they have. It can only strengthen their role within Alberta, and then the wider reading and writing community. (Participant 11)*

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## THEME 7: BUILDING AN INDIVIDUAL ALSO BUILDS THE COMMUNITY

Question 10/11 looked for examples of feedback loops within the system by asking for an example of a program that impacted the writing community. Participants could provide a collective or individual example. While some participants struggled to articulate an example or simply declined to respond, participants who shared examples referred to the ripple effect of good programming, whether it be a mentorship program, a poet laureate position or programming that amplifies different voices. Participants noted how while there is individual benefit for writers using the programs, the programs also yield on-going benefit by strengthening writers who in turn can support other writers in the future.



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## PARTICIPANT QUOTES

*But that's a very kind of in-depth program, and people that come out of that there's a lot of success stories in terms of being being not published beforehand, and then being published afterwards, and not just because more time has passed I think it's because the program probably accelerates their their development. (Participant 1)*

*Anything that has had to do with elevating underrepresented voices, I think it's made huge difference. I don't know what it looks like for the Writers guild membership, but I know for us even just like these small things like Own Voices and Borderlines, and and even just doing like small little things like it's like we're like I mean it's gonna be a long process, to like ever create true equality. Right? But I think we're moving in the right direction, and like those types of programs that really give those voices a safe space are starting to show, right? and it and it's showing within, you know, the types of you know the the individuals that we have within our community, and that's just kind of getting wider and and stronger.(Participant 6)*

*Our Horizons mentorship, program that really supports like BIPOC members of the Writing community. And you know any of the mentorship programs really, like, we're taking writers and pairing them with established writers, and you know, for 4 or 5 months. They get to have one on one time with writers and help and help curate their own works, which I think, is invaluable. And you know one of the again, I can think of off the top of my head is Ali Brian, who, I believe, started off in our membership, program, I, think in 2013. She went on to you know, write a book, and when all these awards and she can use to write books, and win awards. And now she actually like is an educator, that re reach out to that facilitate some of our programming. You know it's kind of like this big circle of life, where you can start off in the mentorship program, and then continue on as a writer yourself, and on top of that you know she gives back to our organization and the community by helping out with these workshops and stuff. (Participant 7)*

*The Poet Laureate as an example, because it's an individual example, but it is also collective in the sense, that the Poet laureate is so visible. (Participant 9)*

*This past September was our first in person awards since I've been in Alberta. Obviously, they're competitors and are competing for places and magazines. Magazines are competing for audience. But there was just such like a camaraderie that, like I was working in Toronto before and it doesn't have that like--there is a writing community and people do support each other, but I don't know, like it just it feels like so much more here. (Participant 11)*

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Question 11/12 sought to identify any limiting factors, impediments or constraints on the writing community, if at all. This also included follow-up questions on the perception of the number of organizations operating in the literary arts, the nature of interactions, and any boundaries limiting the community from thriving.

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#### THEME 8: TIME IS THE BIGGEST BARRIER IN ALBERTA'S WRITING COMMUNITY

Responses about limitations included identifying a challenge with Alberta's reputation nationally and how Alberta writers are not perceived in the same way in larger markets, even regarding publisher reputation. Additionally, a major barrier within the writing community is access to time to write and exposure. This was discussed through acknowledgment of current costs of living, lack of physical spaces to host events, and ease of publication.

When asked about the perception of the number of organizations, participants generally felt that there was a sufficient number and that each organization served a distinct purpose. Some participants identified opportunities to better leverage existing organizations and seek more opportunities to collaborate.

Generally, participants felt that Alberta's writing community was thriving. Observations and comparisons between writing communities in other provinces across Canada were favourable and, in some cases, participants felt that Alberta's writing community was more vibrant than those in other provinces.



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## PARTICIPANT QUOTES

*We don't see books published by Alberta writers the same as we see books published by Toronto writers. And then we probably don't see that the same as books published by New York or California writers or published in the States or have that have success in the States. (Participant 1)*

*It's time restriction, right? Many people can't or don't have the means to write full time, even though maybe they could, you know. So, having some more funding available for individual writers would be nice. But yeah, I think mainly time. Time is a huge one that I when I speak to members, you know they want, I mean even myself, I want to have more time to write. It's hard to make a living as a full-time writer, especially full-time creative writer. So yeah, I think time and money that's always it's always a big obstacle. (Participant 2)*

*There still seems to be a misconception that Alberta, being the oil rich province it is, is just dripping in money that any artist can access which is certainly not the case. (Participant 3)*

*Exposure to the rest of the country, I think, is a big thing. I guess that's more, for like professional writers who are trying to get their name and their books out beyond our borders—it's really, really, really challenging. (Participant 6)*

*We have our funding that we rely on, and there's a lot of great funding available out there. But again, there could always be more. (Participant 7)*

*Lack of venues, lack of space in the public, to do the thing because we will write--although in our bedrooms, or whatever we do. Like we are insular sort of set of people, but showcasing it is the big shebang, right? When you got celebrated, you kinda want to get out there and say well, this is what I did. It might just be spaces, spaces and time, to really to really emphasize what people are doing. (Participant 9)*

*Outreach to the smaller, perhaps isolated communities is always needed and right now is a bit limited.(...) Time and staff limits might prevent doing the outreach needed. (Participant 10)*

*People's times, whether you're a writer with the time to write and then getting your stuff seen and consumed by people. We already have so many things competing for our attention, both as creators and consumers And so you know, it's maybe--I don't wanna be like marketing, because what does that mean for a writer--but you know it's maybe getting people's voices heard again. (Participant 11)*

*People always need to eat. And so, the current rise in the cost of living is going to make it more difficult for people to focus leisure time on writing. (Participant 13)*

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### ASPECT 3: UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATIONS

The third aspect of the conceptual framework sought to collect opportunities, challenges and common goals within the writing community.

Question 12/13 collected information about how organizations nurture the writing community in Alberta including identifying if common goals were in place and any unique context to being a writer in Alberta.

Generally, participants felt like the writing community is nurtured through programming and offering supports to writers. When asked to identify common goals, there were a variety of responses. Responses were rooted around the ideas of support, networking and recognition. One participant concisely noted they couldn't "articulate any across the board goals. There is a vague sense of camaraderie, and then (...) a lot of people who continue to sort of work in their own little orbits" (Participant 13).

In terms of a unique context to being a writer in Alberta, participants discussed the provincial identity and how that is interpreted across Canada. Some participants discussed the idea of awareness of the cultural industries in Alberta, both within and without Alberta, and others discussed the role writers play in Alberta in the social commentary of living in Alberta. Others determined that there was no significant difference in being a writer in Alberta versus in other places.

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### THEME 9: ALBERTA'S WRITING COMMUNITY IS THRIVING

Question 13/14 asked about the overall health of the writing community and if there were any programs or services that would help improve or strengthen it. The strong consensus from participants is that the writing community is vibrant and strong. Efforts to continue to connect people and deliver programming to the community are essential to keeping the community thriving.




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#### PARTICIPANT QUOTES

*I think it's strong. I think there's definitely a lot of talent. (Participant 1)*

*We are pretty convinced as an organization that there's a 150 more playwrights working out there who just have never accessed our services for whatever reason. So, I think it's very healthy and vibrant. (Participant 3)*

*Oh, I think that it's amazing and I think it's constantly growing. (Participant 6)*

*I'm excited. The stack of books beside my bed, it doesn't get smaller--so that's a good sign. And I think that there is this sort of rising tide of people coming to understand that really good writers are choosing to live here and work here, and write about here, and that's not hugely new. But it's the recognition of that that is relatively new so I'm very optimistic. (Participant 13)*

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Question 14/15 focused on defining a future state and how organizations can better serve the community in the future. This included identifying underserved communities and specifically how organizations saw the WGA meeting that need. Underserved communities identified included: youth, emerging, BIPOC and minority writers, and rural writers.

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## CLOSING QUESTIONS

The last section of questions served to provide an opportunity for participants to share any other relevant information and confirm participation and consent.

The final question, Question 15/16, provided an open-ended question for the participant to share any relevant information that was not directly asked for or remained top of mind for the participant. It also provided an opportunity for the participant to identify other participants who could be approached to participate. A confirmation of consent was also included.

Participants took the opportunity to underscore the vibrancy and strength of the writing community and the joy they receive from participating in the writing community in Alberta.

All participants maintained their consent to participate in this research.

## STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS FINDINGS

The stakeholder analysis was conducted following the completion of the analysis of interviews. Findings and themes identified through the interviews were used to place stakeholders within the Prominence-Support Grid, Table 8, page 39.

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## PLACEMENT ON THE SUPPORT AXIS

Generally, organizations had a positive perspective and impression of the WGA. For this reason, most organizations were placed in the positive position on the Support axis.

A specific set of stakeholders were placed in the neutral position. These stakeholders are funding agencies. The reason for this placement was to reflect the preference of participants to skip questions related to effectiveness of the WGA and to avoid providing responses that could be perceived as direction. The participants who represented funding agencies stressed the importance of neutrality and either skipped questions or requested their responses remained as anonymous as possible.

The exception to this trend was "Other national writing organizations", which was placed in the negative position (-1). The reason for this was due to a difficulty in recruiting participants in this research. Refusal to participate was not a standalone factor used by the researcher to determine placement, however the reasoning provided by declined participants in this group (that they had little value to contribute to a discussion about Alberta's writing community) weighed into the placement decision. The researcher has interpreted this response as a degree of separation between national organizations and the Alberta writing community. They do not perceive themselves as part of the Alberta writing community.

Table 6 Stakeholder Analysis - Placement on the Support Axis

Negative (-1)	Neutral (0)	Positive (+1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other national writing organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Edmonton Arts Council</li> <li>Calgary Arts Development</li> <li>Alberta Foundation for the Arts</li> <li>Canada Council for the Arts</li> <li>Other funding agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alexandra Writers Centre Society</li> <li>Other Literary Arts Organizations</li> <li>Public Libraries</li> <li>Professional Development Organizations for the Arts Sector</li> <li>Canadian Authors Association</li> <li>Post-secondary education institutions</li> </ul>

### PLACEMENT ON THE PROMINENCE AXIS

Considering the same organizations from the perspective of prominence, stakeholders were divided by their influence on the WGA. Stakeholders were also examined for their purpose and focus. Organizations such as public libraries and post-secondary education institutions were identified as minor stakeholders from this perspective because their focus is not primarily on supporting the writing community or delivering arts services. The scope and focus of the organization were also considered, for example genre specific organizations were also categorized as minor as well as organizations who had a broader focus than just writing or Alberta were also categorized as minor.

Major stakeholders were considered to have significant influence or position within the Alberta writing community and the ability to influence or effect the WGA. Generally, these are funding agencies who are in the position to grant funding to the WGA. The exception to this group is the Alexandra Writers Centre Society. Through many interviews, the Alexandra Writers Centre Society was the top stakeholder suggested by other participants to interview as part of this research. Additionally, through the interview process similarities in terms of services and mandate became clear. For this reason, the Alexandra Writers Centre Society is considered a major stakeholder for the WGA.

Table 7 Stakeholder Analysis - Placement on the Prominence Axis

Minor (0)	Major (1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Libraries</li> <li>Professional Development Organizations for the Arts Sector</li> <li>Other Literary Arts Organizations</li> <li>Canadian Authors Association</li> <li>Post-secondary education institutions</li> <li>Other national writing organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alexandra Writers Centre Society</li> <li>Edmonton Arts Council</li> <li>Calgary Arts Development</li> <li>Alberta Foundation for the Arts</li> <li>Canada Council for the Arts</li> <li>Other funding agencies</li> </ul>

## ASSEMBLING THE PROMINENCE-SUPPORT GRID

Combining the placements on the support and prominence axes, Table 8 – Stakeholder Analysis was assembled. When the Support and Prominence axes were cross-tabulated, six groups of stakeholders emerged.

Table 8 Stakeholder Analysis

		PROMINENCE	
		0	1
SUPPORT	+1	<b>Collaborate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other Literary Arts Organizations</li> <li>Public Libraries</li> <li>Professional Development Organizations for the Arts Sector</li> <li>Canadian Authors Association</li> <li>Post-secondary education institutions</li> </ul>	<b>Involve</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alexandra Writers Centre Society</li> </ul>
	0	<b>No Action</b> N/A	<b>Monitor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Edmonton Arts Council</li> <li>Calgary Arts Development</li> <li>Alberta Foundation for the Arts</li> <li>Canada Council for the Arts</li> <li>Other funding agencies</li> </ul>
	-1	<b>Monitor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other national writing organizations</li> </ul>	<b>Defend</b> N/A

- The Alexandra Writers' Centre Society is placed in the Involve category based on their positive perspective of the WGA and their influence within the writing community. As a stakeholder they have a great potential to create positive impact in the writing community if they were more involved with the WGA.
- A group of collaborators was also identified. They include stakeholders who have a positive perception of the WGA but may have less influence on the WGA or possess specific focuses within the writing community. The WGA could leverage relationships with collaborators to create positive impact for the writing community.
- Stakeholders to monitor fall into two separate groups.
  - The first group is made up of funding organizations. They should be monitored based on their influence directly on the WGA but they have a neutral perception of the WGA.
  - The second group includes organizations that are considered to have limited influence on the WGA but a negative perception of the WGA. This

group includes other national writing organizations for the reasons stated above when determined their level of support for the WGA.

- There were no stakeholders that were placed within the No Action or Defend groups because no organizations or group of organizations fell into the Negative Support-High Prominence or Neutral Support-Low Prominence categories.

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#### THEME 10: THE WGA HAS MANY ORGANIZATIONS TO COLLABORATE OR INVOLVE IN PURSUING ITS MISSION AND VISION

Hester & Adams (2017) note the importance of utilizing a stakeholder analysis to inform a stakeholder management plan based on the identified stakeholder groups. Based on this next step, the WGA has a number of stakeholders to collaborate with and involve in the future. There are also a number of stakeholders who should be engaged with to improve or leverage existing relationships, namely those in the Monitor groupings.

#### SYSTEMS-MAPPING FINDINGS

Following the analysis of the interviews and stakeholders, systems maps were drawn based on system dynamics described. A general community map, Figure 9, was developed to further examine the system relationships between different actors within the Alberta writing community.

Other maps identified include:

- Writing Organization perspective map (Figure 10)
- Writer's perspective map (Figure 11)
- Common goals cycle map (Figure 12)
- Grant funding loop map (Figure 13)
- Awards and recognition loop map (Figure 14)
- Reputation and Community Growth Map (Figure 15)

Each map is presented and analysed in this section.

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#### COMMUNITY MAP ANALYSIS

The community map (Figure 9) was drawn to identify known relationships between organizations and stakeholders. At the top of the map, moving downward, are the general public. The general public includes a sub-set of the population defined as the writing community. They also form the audience for the writing community. Writers make up the writing community and participate in the community as a network of writers. Writers are also connected to the general public through publishers, who distribute their written work back to the general public in the form of books and magazines, across all genres of writing. Writers are supported directly through non-profit arts organizations, like the WGA, community groups, non-governmental organizations and public libraries. They also are eligible for individual grants through governments and their subsidiaries. There are also supports for training and education for writers through post-secondary education institutions, such as creative writing programs.

**THEME 11: ALBERTA ARTS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS LACK A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION FOR THEIR FIELD**

Of note in this community map is the inclusion of professional development organizations. There are professional organizations in Alberta focused on publishing such as the Alberta Magazine Publishers Association or the Book Publishers Association of Alberta. However, upon research, there does not appear to be an organization to support arts sector nonprofit organizations such as the WGA. Arts and cultural management and administration is an established field, yet it does not appear to have a professional organization in Alberta.

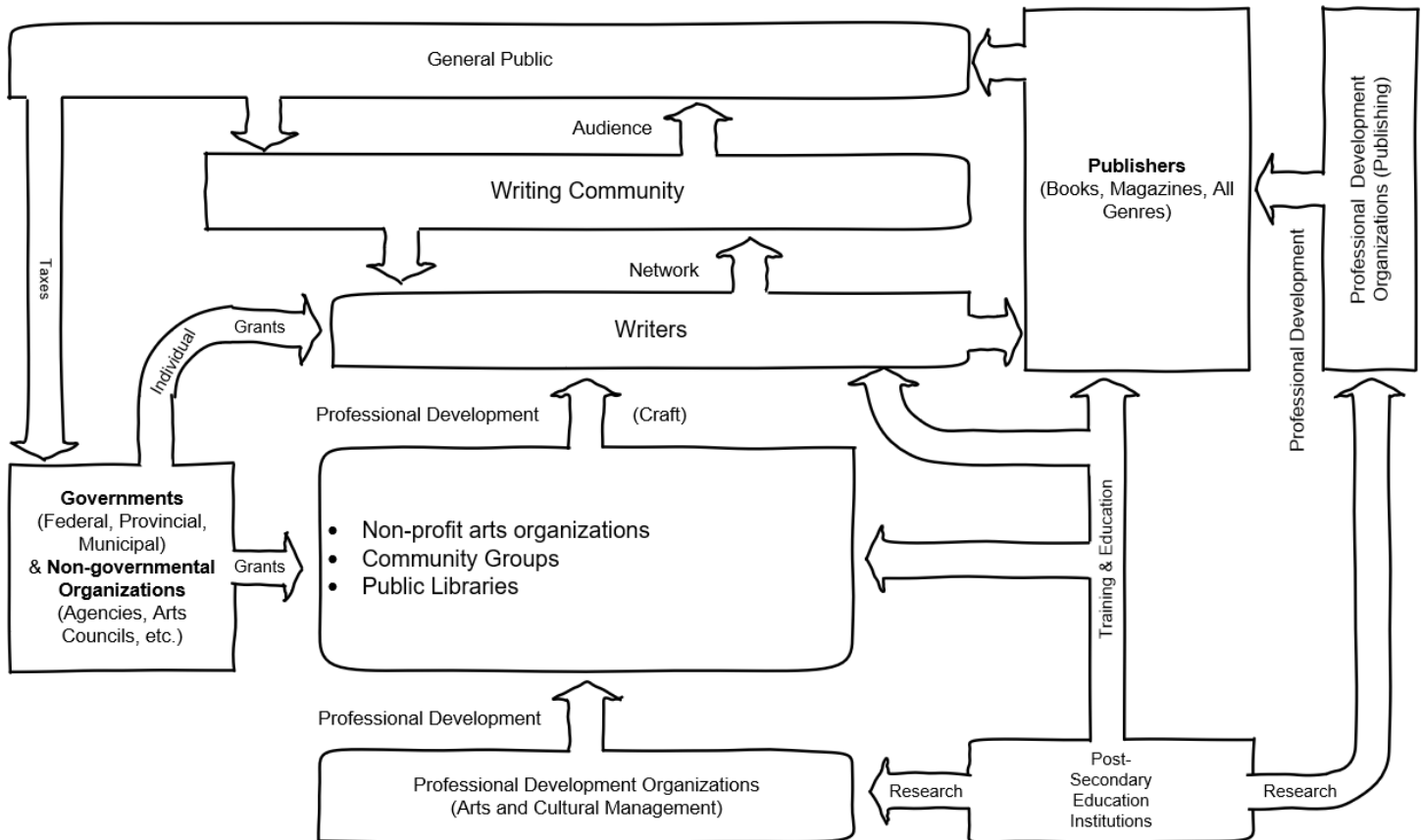


Figure 9 Writing Community Map

**WRITING ORGANIZATION PERSPECTIVE MAP ANALYSIS**

The writing organization perspective map (Figure 10) summarizes information collected through interviews. As noted above in the interview findings, many of the writing organizations share a similar operating model. Participants identified four primary funding sources: (1) Government, (2) government agencies, (3) the public and (4) writers. From those funding sources, five types of funding are received: (1) grants, (2) fundraising dollars, (3) donations, (4) membership dues, and (5) fees for service. These five types of funding are received by the writing organization and use for two types of expenses: (1) administration and (2) programming. Administration costs include staffing, contracts, leases, rentals, financial management, marketing, and promotion. Of these costs,

participants had identified staffing to be the largest cost of administration. Programming costs are related to two types of programming: (1) skill development, such as workshops, mentorship programs and retreats; and (2) celebration and recognition, such as awards galas and open mics. These two types of programming are funded through a second level of granting administered by the writing organization through bursaries, subsidies and awards.

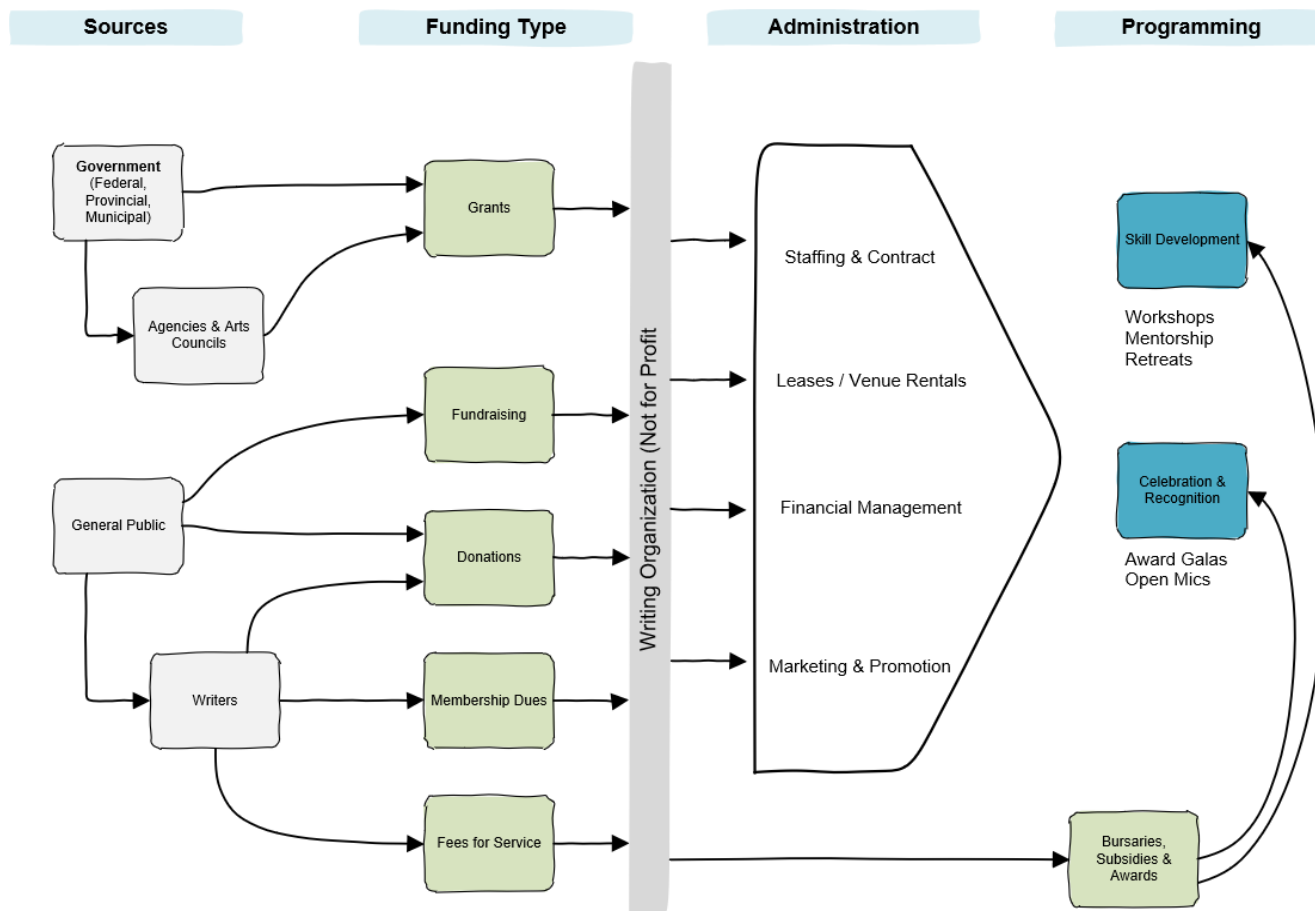


Figure 10 Writing Organization Perspective Map

### WRITER'S PERSPECTIVE MAP

The writer's perspective map (Figure 10) was developed as a companion to the writing organization map. As the primary participant of programs delivered by writing organizations, understanding the writer's perspective is an important perspective within the system. While individual members of the writing community were not engaged directly, the map was drawn from participant responses from their professional experience as well as personal experiences, as many participants self-identified as writers.

Five (5) questions from writers were identified based on services and motivations:

1. How can I become a better writer?
2. How can I get published?
3. How can I fund my writing?

4. How can I get recognized for my writing?
5. Where can I meet other writers?

To respond to these needs, writers seek programming and services related to skill development, subsidies, grants, bursaries, and awards, events, celebrations and festivals, and regular communication channels.

There are three other actors within this map: (1) literary agents and publishers, who are responsible for publishing outcomes; (2) arts organizations, who deliver the programming and services to writers; and (3) government, who provide grants to both writers as individuals and the writing organizations.

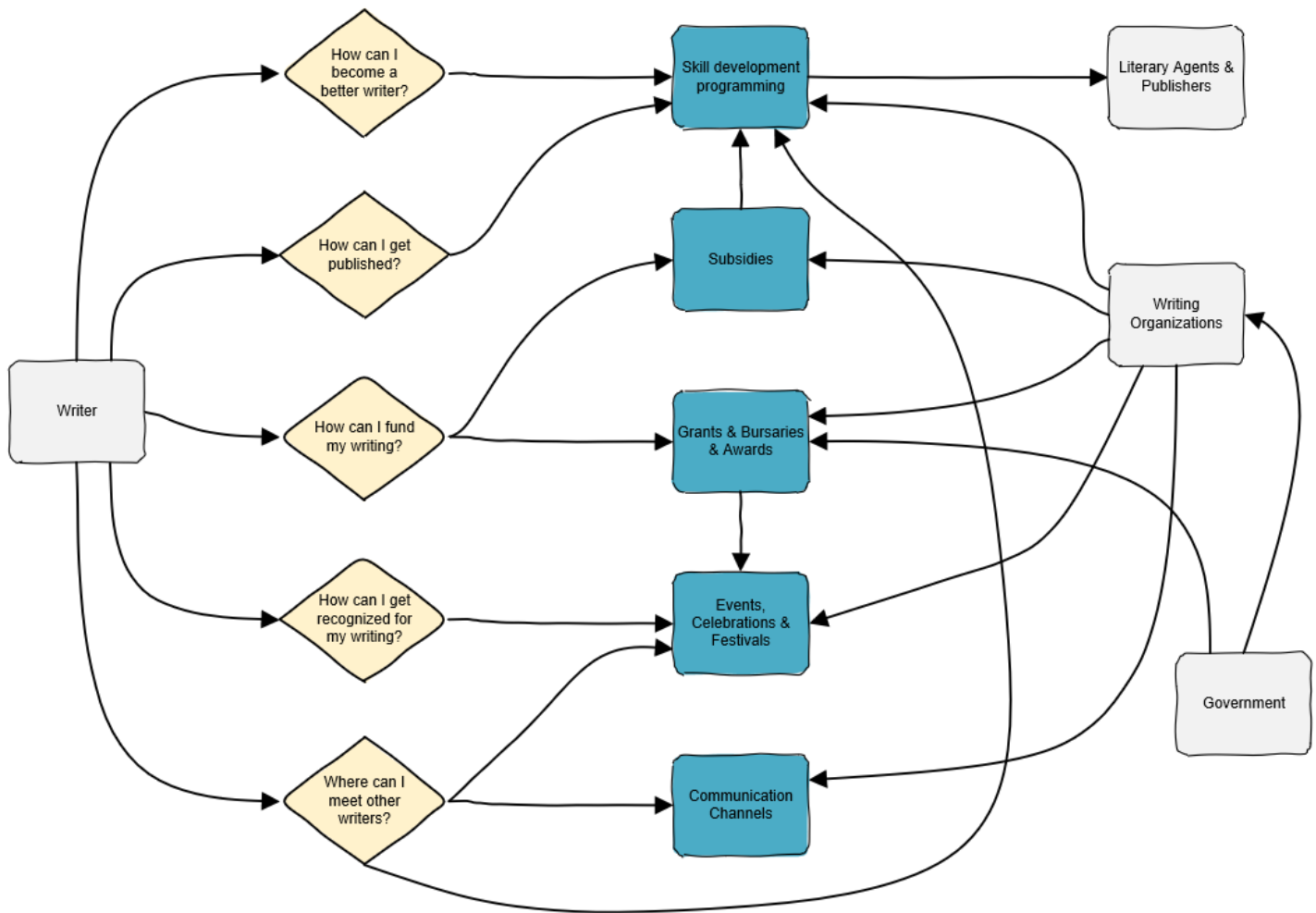


Figure 11 Writer's Perspective Map

**THEME 12: PROGRAM DELIVERY CAN APPEAR CONFUSING TO WRITERS WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF WHO TO CONTACT**

By comparison to the writing organization perspective map (Figure 10), which was fairly linear, the writer's perspective map is less clean. The writer has clear desires and

questions; however, the answers to those questions are not simple. There are many interconnections and dependencies. This map was also simplified by collapsing all writing organizations into one actor: there are many organizations who deliver all the programs in Figure 11; some cover all programs, while others offer only a few.

### COMMON GOALS CYCLE MAP

Previous findings from the interview analysis demonstrated that writing organizations share common goals. They also share similar funding sources and expenses. They also have a desire to collaborate but describe a current state that is isolated and disconnected. In the common goals and cycle map (Figure 12), the current state is documented (blue arrows), as well as an alternative goal cycle based on more integrated planning and collaboration (black arrows).

The current state includes two balancing feedback loops that are restricting growth. Currently, organizations are starting from a common goal and delivering similar programs, funded from similar sources. This flow then creates competition for participation and a perception of scarcity in resourcing that is ultimately delaying attainment of common goals. (A specific map has also been drawn to analyse the grant funding loop present in this

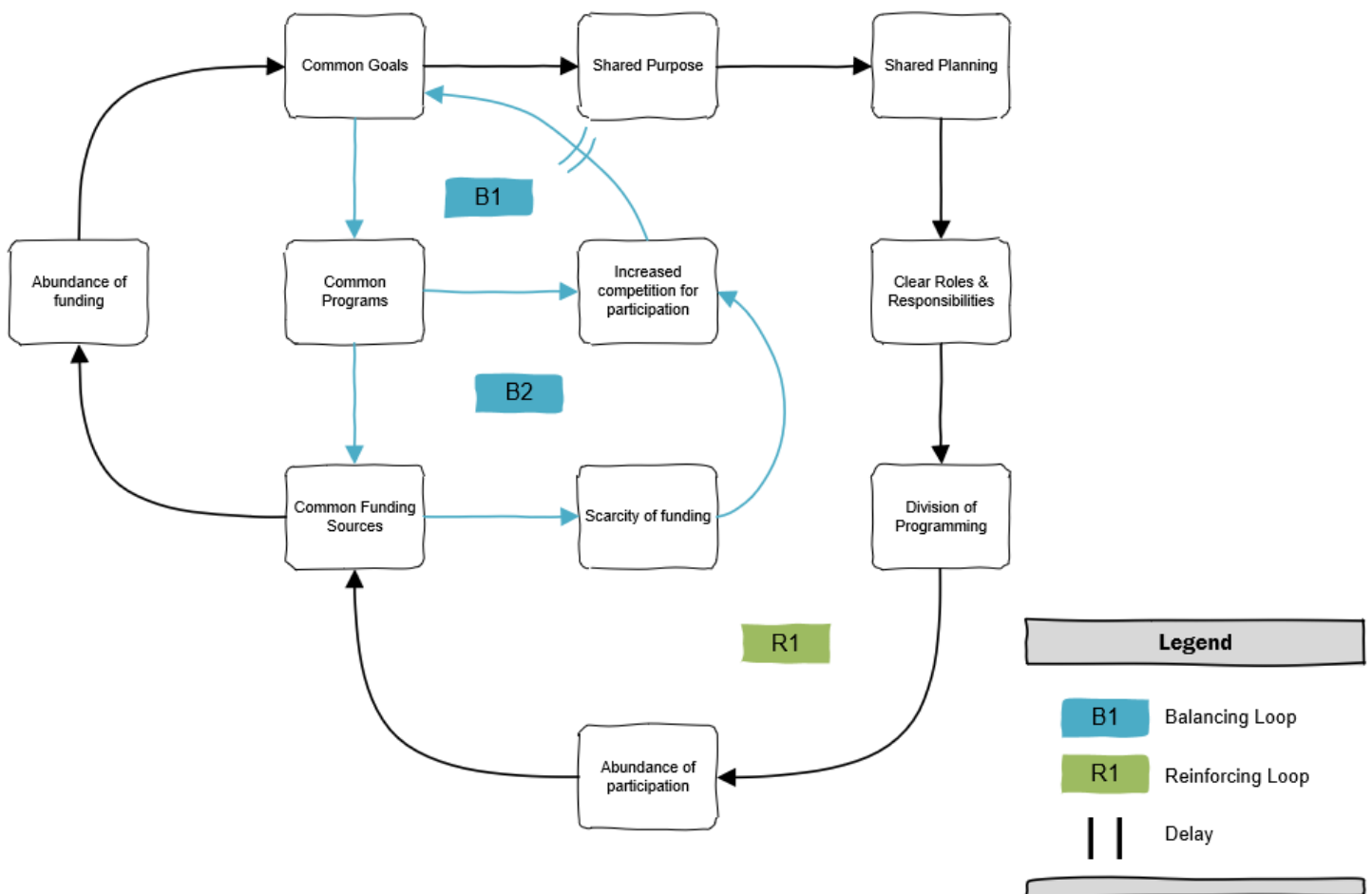


Figure 12 Common Goals Cycle Map

system, Figure 13, below.) This flow could also be described as the system archetype “Accidental Adversaries” (Stroh, 2015).

### THEME 13: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO PROGRAM PLANNING COULD OPTIMIZE EXISTING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The alternative begins in the same place, with common goals. From there, the flow navigates through a shared purpose and planning phase before defining roles and responsibilities and a division of programming. Through a division of programming, there is no longer competition for participation and common funding sources are distributed for optimal utilization. This leads to attainment of common goals within the system.

#### GRANT FUNDING LOOP MAP

The current granting structure was identified as a common system archetype: shifting the burden (Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015). If the desired state for writing organizations is the ability to collect sufficient operating revenue to achieve sufficient operating capacity to deliver programs to the writing community, government grants are an interim measure. By continually using operating grants to offset operating costs, writing organizations become reliant on operating grants for survival. Similarly, short-term project grants support innovation for one-time programming, however there is not always sufficient on-going revenue to ensure the longevity of the program. While grants are considered stable, writing organizations have little to no control over continued granting opportunities.

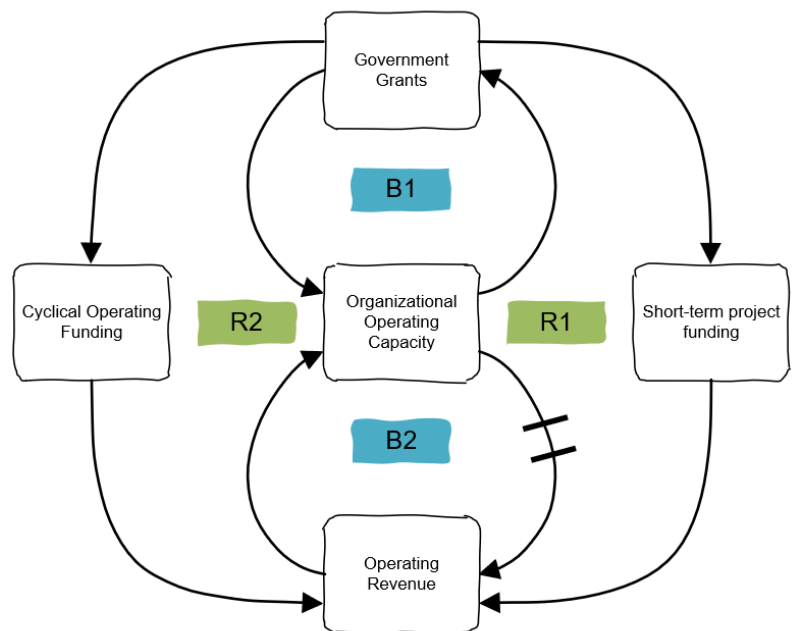


Figure 13 Grant Loop Map

To address this system archetype, Senge (2006) recommends focusing on the fundamental solution: in this case generating operating revenue from non-grant sources. In the short-term, grants can be used as a stop-gap measure to diverting focus on other funding sources and types.

Often the argument is made that reliance on grant funding is just part of the arts sector, however at least one participant noted that the majority of their organizations revenue did not come from grants. Therefore, it is possible to consider other funding structures in Alberta's writing community. That said, other organizations spoke about the challenges arising from being unable to access grant funding. In one case, the organization had a deficit and did not qualify for grant programs because of their financial position. Therefore, deciding to shift financial models should be well thought through before proceeding.

### AWARDS AND RECOGNITION LOOP MAP

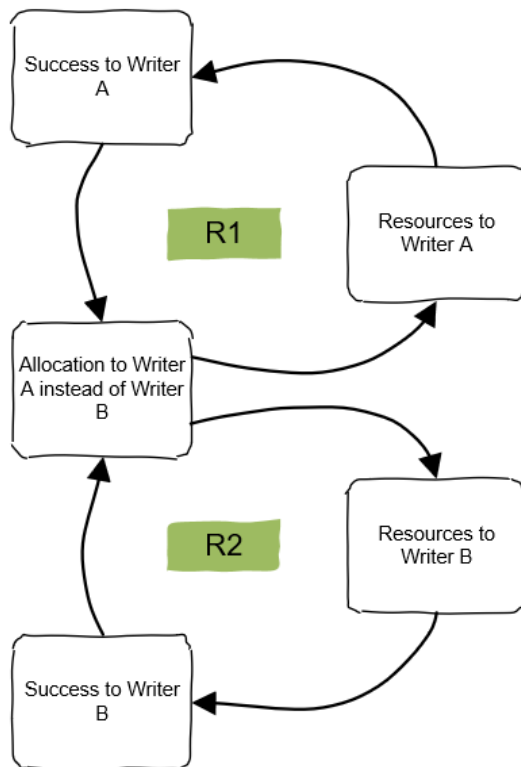


Figure 14 Awards and Recognition Loop Map

A second system archetype was identified through interviews. This system archetype, Success to the Successful, was identified in two scenarios. In general, the Success to the Successful system archetype can be detected by comments such as “we see the same faces” or “others are doing well, but I can’t seem to break through” (Senge, 2006).

The first scenario where this archetype emerged was in relation to awards. Participants described the perception that awards go to the same people time and time again or the same people are given opportunities to participate on award juries. This dynamic is seen in Figure 14 whereby Writer A is given an award which brings them success, which then helps them achieve subsequent awards and success. Writer B however does not receive an award and thereby it becomes more difficult to receive future awards and recognition.

The second scenario where this archetype emerged was in relation to workshop teaching and other contract employment related to writing. Participants described the challenges of finding writers interested in teaching workshops and other courses. When writers are willing (Writer A), the organization invests in them to prepare them for teaching. With practice and experience they gain success which makes them a more desirable candidate for future teaching opportunities. By contrast, Writer B may not receive the opportunity and therefore does not get the experience or success. Their chances of achieving a teaching post opposite a known, successful instructor diminishes.

In both these scenarios the future success of writers is impacted in a third way. Having the financial means to be a writer is not always easy, therefore writers rely on awards and teaching opportunities to supplement any money made through the direct act of writing. Therefore, the “Success to the Successful” archetype has a more potent impact on the writing community by shrinking the number of active writers through concentrated resources to a few. This challenge is further developed in Figure 15, Reputation and Community Growth Map.

## REPUTATION AND COMMUNITY GROWTH MAP

### THEME 14: RECOGNITION AND REPUTATION IMPACT COMMUNITY GROWTH

As mentioned above, known writers impact the perception of size of a community. General knowledge to name local writers relates to the level of awareness of the writing community by the general public. As demonstrated in Figure 9 Writing Community Map, the writing community is a subset of the general public, and writers a subset of the writing community. Therefore, a conclusion can be made that the broader the awareness about the writing community, the broader the community is in membership.

In Figure 15, the relationship between reputation and community growth is further defined by the number of known writers and the perceived size the community. This systems map speaks to the exclusivity or inclusivity of the community. While the previous map, Figure 14, spoke to an exclusivity within the community whereby a few become successful while the majority struggle, Figure 15 demonstrates connections that can be leveraged to improve this flow. By leveraging who receives awards or employment opportunities, the number of known writers could be increased based on participation in the community. With more known faces, the size of the community appears to increase. As more people participate in the community, its reputation as a viable and stable community also increases. Leveraging any awareness of the community reputation can continue to bolster this trend. This then leads to actual community growth as more people join the writing community. As the community grows, more people are then known to be writers and are eligible for awards and employment as writers.

This flow can also continue in the inverse. If less writers are known, then the community can be perceived as small and as though there is less opportunity. People then may choose to not participate in the writing community, creating further strain on opportunities and reinforcing the success to the successful loop discussed previously.

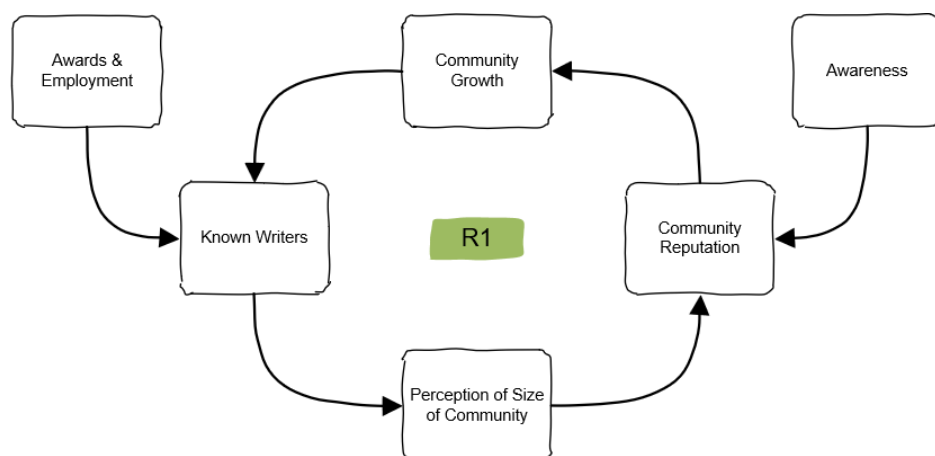


Figure 15 Reputation and Community Growth Map

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This research includes three methods of analysis that were reviewed in this Findings section: Key informant interviews, Stakeholder analysis, and System maps analysis.

Through key informant interviews, WGA staff and stakeholders from other organizations within the Alberta writing community, were asked to reflect on their organization's identity, interactions and motivations within the writing community. Participants noted common purposes, funding sources and similar expenses. They also identified that while each organization values collaboration, no organization seemed to be doing it very well. Some responses indicated a perceived leadership role within the community towards the WGA, which aligns with its status as the primary arts service organization for writing in Alberta. In general, organizations are co-existing with hopes of collaborating more effectively in the future. All participants described the writing community in Alberta as thriving, regardless of any perceived challenges.

The stakeholder analysis yielded a finding that there are many current and potential partners for the WGA to collaborate within the delivery of their mission and pursuit of their vision. The majority of organizations have a positive perception of the WGA, with funding organizations preferring to remain neutral. However, there may be opportunity on the national scale, as national writing organizations were the only participant groups to generally decline participation in this research through participant interviews.

The analysis of systems maps identified some gaps, systems archetypes and perspectives for consideration. A significant gap was a system-wide absence of a professional development organization to support writing organizations. Other professional development organizations exist for publishing however, none for the arts and cultural management administrators. System archetypes identified include shifting the burden, and success to successful, and accidental adversaries. The success to the successful archetype was identified in two scenarios, with broader impacts on community growth and viability. There was also a finding related to potential ambiguity from the perspective of a writer in accessing programs and funding.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter integrates learnings from the literature review and findings sections to examine implications and answers to the research questions. The chapter also determines whether the primary research question can be answered based on the research conducted. Unexpected findings are discussed, and limitations of the research are noted.

### ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

#### PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary research question this research aimed to answer was:

**What role should be assumed by the WGA to collaborate effectively within the writing community?**

To answer this question, there are several elements of this question that need to be clearly defined. Firstly, who is the writing community? Secondly, what does it mean to collaborate? Thirdly, how does an organization like the WGA collaborate effectively? Lastly, what roles are available for the WGA to assume?



Figure 16 Nested systems within a writing community

To define the writing community, the concept of nested systems from the literature review could be applied as demonstrated in Figure 16, and adapted from a figure presented in Waddell et al. (2015). The largest level of the system is the writing community as a whole, the next layer down represents the writing organizations within the community, of which those organizations may have sub-groups of writers, and individual writers make up the smallest system in the nest. Writers therefore are part of all aspects of the writing community because they are the smallest unit within the community and form the subset for all larger levels of systems. In Figure 9 Writing Community Map (p. 41), this nested system is elaborated in more detail to describe other actors within the system.

As defined within the literature review, collaboration is generally accepted to mean two or more organizations working together towards a shared goal (le Pennec & Raufflet, 2018; McLaughlin, 2010). Meadows & Wright

(2008), Senge, (2006) and Stroh (2015) also note that an indication of whether shared goals are in the place is the presence of known system archetypes. Based on this definition, the WGA is already collaborating with other organizations in the writing community to work towards shared goals. However, there are common system archetypes detected within the writing community, therefore further examination of the strength of collaboration is required. Through interviews, participants were asked to determine whether there were shared goals within the writing community and all agreed that there were, however few participants could articulate them. When a shared goal was articulated, language varied between participants.

This leads to the second element of the primary research question: defining effective collaboration. Effective collaboration is based on a variety of factors including shared visions and goals, chosen levels of collaboration, and motivations for collaboration. Depending on the choices in each of these factors, different roles could be assumed. Choices are presented in Table 9 Effective Collaboration Factors and Options.

Table 9 Effective Collaboration Factors and Options

Shared Vision	Levels of Collaboration	Motivations for Collaboration
(le Pennec & Raufflet, 2018; Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006; Stroh, 2015)	(le Pennec & Raufflet, 2018)	(Bryson et al., 2006; Gray & Stites, 2013; McLaughlin, 2010)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly stated shared vision</li> <li><b>Absence of shared vision</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Associational</b></li> <li><b>Transferred</b></li> <li>Interactional</li> <li>Synergistic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Legitimacy-based</b></li> <li>Competency-based</li> <li><b>Resource-based</b></li> <li>Society-based</li> </ul>

In the current state of collaboration as stated above, there is an absence of a stated shared vision, levels of collaboration are generally associational and transferred, and current motivations are legitimacy- and resource-based (bolded in Table 9).

Upon further examination, there is variation in how the WGA works with other organizations. Some organizations describe their relationship with the WGA as arms-length while others are more closely aligned. This, however, is not necessarily an indication of effectiveness if the intended degree of collaboration is associational. If however, the intended level of collaboration is interactional or synergistic, then the WGA is not meeting the needs for collaboration within the writing community. Based on stated desired future relationship, the WGA should consider interactional and synergistic levels of collaboration with other organizations.

In turn, the motivations within the writing community are also inconsistent. The WGA's mission and vision allude to a desire for more society-based motivations as they seek to influence society and the economy in a positive way for writers. In practice, their collaborations appear to be resource-based as past partnerships and collaborations were mentioned as leveraging combined resources to execute a program or event. Stakeholders currently collaborate with the WGA for competency or legitimacy-based motivations, seeking to leverage the skill of WGA staff and the reputation of the WGA.

## CONSIDERING A NEW ROLE

Before deciding to change roles or keep its current role, the WGA should consider several factors such as the current health of the writing community, alignment with the WGA's current mission and vision, any urgency to change, and lastly competition within the writing community.

When examining the perceived current health of the writing community, participants, with resounding consensus, affirm that the community is thriving. This leads to an argument for a status-quo role for the WGA. The role it is currently assuming seems to be sufficient within the community. With that said, there were comments from participants about desires

for improved collaboration and partnership with the WGA, so while the community is thriving, participants noted the role of the WGA could be improved. When participants elaborated on what their relationship looked like in the future with the WGA, many looked to the WGA for connection and coordination. This aligns most closely with the Connector role, described in Table 10 Roles for Consideration, below.

When examining alignment of the three roles presented in Table 10 with the WGA's current mission and vision statements, the Strategic role most closely aligns with its current purpose and focus. The Connector role does not account for the advocacy and economic elements of the current WGA mission, while the Operations role focuses solely on the growth aspects of their mission.

The urgency to change is also important to consider. Based on the research and the current organizational changes at the WGA due to the retirement of the previous Executive Director, there is some momentum that could be leveraged by the WGA to shift its role, if it so chooses.

A last consideration is competition for each of the proposed roles. Currently, there is a gap in the writing community related to both the Strategic and Connector roles. Most organizations are filling and striving to fill the Operations role causing competition and system flows that generate archetypes such as "Accidental Adversaries".

**Table 10 Roles for Consideration**

Role	Strategic	Connector	Operations
<b>Description</b>	With a focus on advocacy, inclusion and recognition, the WGA is an organization that leads conversations and research about the writing community in Alberta and collaborates with all organizations to ensure on-going vibrancy of the writing community. The WGA uplifts the writing community in Alberta.	With a focus on coordinating efforts, the WGA is an organization that is seen as the hub of the writing community. They are a principal community liaison for all writers and connect writers with other organizations based on their unique needs, interest and writing journey. The WGA connects writers and fosters community.	With a focus on program delivery, the WGA is a leader in programs and services to the writing community. They are the principal organization responsible for building capacity and growing the craft of writing in Alberta. The WGA builds writers in Alberta.
<b>Level(s) of Collaboration</b>	Synergistic	Interaccional	Associational and Transferred
<b>Motivations of Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Society-based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource-based</li> <li>Society-based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legitimacy-based</li> <li>Competency-based</li> <li>Resource-based</li> </ul>

## SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Utilizing the focus areas from the conceptual framework, the following secondary questions were identified and used throughout this research to further refine the primary research question.

Aspect	Secondary Questions
<b>Understanding Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What role does the WGA currently play within the writing community in Alberta?</li> <li>• Are there programs or services the WGA should cease to deliver because they are better aligned with other organizations and their mandates than with the WGA's role and mandate?</li> </ul>
<b>Understanding Interactions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which organizations support the WGA's current role?</li> <li>• Which organizations compete with the WGA in its current role?</li> </ul>
<b>Understanding Motivations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where are leverage points within the system that can help strengthen the WGA's role in Alberta?</li> <li>• How best does the WGA maintain its competitive advantage as Alberta's primary arts service organization focused on writing and literary arts?</li> </ul>

The following section responds to these questions based on the research conducted.

### WHAT ROLE DOES THE WGA CURRENTLY PLAY WITHIN THE WRITING COMMUNITY IN ALBERTA?

Formally, the WGA is the primary arts service organization for writing and literary arts in Alberta (Writers' Guild of Alberta, 2023). Through this designation, they are eligible for operating funding through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. This operating funding supports the WGA's ongoing work in support of their mission and vision statements. The WGA's mission is: "We support and advocate for all writers and provide opportunities to grow and connect while enriching Alberta's culture and economy" (Writers' Guild of Alberta, 2021b). Its vision is "a thriving writing community that is diverse, valued, and celebrated" (Writers' Guild of Alberta, 2021b).

Through interviews, WGA staff identified a core role in supporting writers in Alberta. Ways this is achieved are through programs and events organized by the WGA. Types of programming include workshops, retreats, manuscript review and subsidies. Stakeholder participants also identified a key leadership role played by the WGA in the Alberta writing community. As the largest writing organization in the province and the largest provincial writing organization in Canada (Alberta Foundation for the Arts, 2021b), the WGA holds a position of leadership within the writing community. The WGA is often looked to to set the tone for work within the community. The WGA is also the only organization who participated in interviews to note advocacy for writers as a way they support the writing community.

Considering the literature review on degree of collaboration, currently the WGA plays a role in information sharing (economic level) and joint programming (operations level) (McLaughlin, 2010).

When asked to rate the WGA's effectiveness in meeting its mission and pursuing its vision, the mean score for both questions indicate that the WGA is effectively achieving its current role and purpose.

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#### ARE THERE PROGRAMS OR SERVICES THE WGA SHOULD CEASE TO DELIVER BECAUSE THEY ARE BETTER ALIGNED WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR MANDATES THAN WITH THE WGA'S ROLE AND MANDATE?

It is difficult to identify specific programs that the WGA should cease to deliver. While there is a general similarity between organizations around program delivery, there was insufficient information collected to definitively state which programs the WGA should look to pass to other organizations. More planning is needed between organizations to determine clear roles and responsibilities. With its current role, the WGA is delivering programs that are well-aligned to its mandate. The challenge arises because multiple organizations share similar mandates, and it is not clear which organization is best suited to deliver specific programs.

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#### WHICH ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT THE WGA'S CURRENT ROLE?

Considering the results of the stakeholder analysis there are many organizations in Alberta that support the WGA's current role. Funders maintain neutrality about the WGA however long-standing funding history and the WGA position as the primary arts service organization indicate support and solid relationships between the WGA and its funders. Other writing organizations also have a generally positive perspective of the WGA and are interested in deepening existing relationships in support of common goals.

Where support is less clear is at the national level, with other writing organizations. As mentioned in the Findings section, national writing organizations were the most challenging to recruit and many did not feel they could provide value in the research as defined. Whether the lack of participation from this stakeholder group should be interpreted as lack of support for the WGA in its current role is uncertain.

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#### WHICH ORGANIZATIONS COMPETE WITH THE WGA IN ITS CURRENT ROLE?

While no participant through interviews indicated they intend to compete with the WGA in its current role, there is significant competition within program delivery. Many organizations offer similar workshops and mentorship programs to the writing community.

"Programs and Events" was the top answer when organizations were asked how their organization supports the writing community. From a macro level, this is a unifying characteristic, but when examined more closely it creates competition for participation within the writing community. More than one participant mentioned challenges with the frequency of events and often how multiple things are scheduled for the same dates and times by different organizations. The absence of a collaborative coordination approach forces writers to choose between events because they cannot attend as many as they would like.

When looking at the system maps developed, organizations compete for funding because of these similar programs. As identified in the analysis of the Common Goals Cycle Map

(Figure 12), this creates a system archetype known as accidental adversaries where organizations unintentionally undermine each other's effort because of siloed actions.

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#### WHERE ARE LEVERAGE POINTS WITHIN THE SYSTEM THAT CAN HELP STRENGTHEN THE WGA'S ROLE IN ALBERTA?

The WGA could strengthen its role within the writing community in Alberta by leveraging its leadership role within the community. By leveraging its leadership role, collaborative planning could occur across the sector. While common goals already exist, open conversations about focusing efforts through various organizations could strengthen the overall system and writing community. This would also put the WGA in a position to leverage its assets related to community advocacy and celebration, increasing the overall recognition within and outside the writing community for writers.

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#### HOW BEST DOES THE WGA MAINTAIN ITS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AS ALBERTA'S PRIMARY ARTS SERVICE ORGANIZATION FOCUSED ON WRITING AND LITERARY ARTS?

By leveraging its leadership role, the WGA can maintain its competitive advantage by helping strengthen the overall system of organizations that support the writers in Alberta. Taking a more strategic role and helping foster inter-organizational collaboration would allow the WGA to focus more heavily on advocacy and creating economic conditions where writers can thrive.

### UNEXPECTED FINDINGS

While many of the findings feel like natural conclusions from participant responses, an unexpected finding was discovered through the systems mapping analysis. In developing the Writing Community Map, Figure 9, an observation was made regarding the absence of a professional development organization to support staff of the writing organizations. Similar types of organizations are present in the publishing aspect of the community, such as the Alberta Magazine Publishers Association or the Editors' Association of Canada, however, there does not appear to be a professional organization for the community development side of the community. This is an interesting finding because it leads to other questions such as:

- How do staff of writing organizations improve their skills?
- What best practices in arts administration could be used to better support the overall writing community?
- Who conducts research about writing communities?
- What are industry trends in writing communities and the literary industry that could be leveraged to bolster Alberta's writing community?

Additionally, while the literature review reinforced the narrative of funding scarcity within the arts, this finding was not validated by this research. Participants generally found that funding was stable and sufficient while noting that more funding is always welcome. The primary concern with current grant funding was difficulty accessing unrestricted operating dollars and translating on-time project dollars into sustainable programs in operating dollars.

## RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

While this research is being conducted for a client, the WGA, it has implications for the broader writing community. The WGA operates within a complex system of writing organizations, community members and funders who together build a vibrant and thriving writing community. Therefore, should the WGA choose to consider the findings, analysis and recommendations of this research and implement changes to their role, it will have fundamental influence on the writing community.

## LIMITATIONS OF ANALYSIS AND AREAS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

This research was conducted through voluntary and consensual participation of WGA staff and stakeholder organizations. While many organizations were approached to participate, some chose to decline opportunities. As a result, this research summarizes themes and findings based on participant perspectives. Additionally, this research focused on organizational relationships and interactions and did not engage directly with individual members of the writing community. There is an opportunity to build from this research and examine community needs more holistically through a community needs assessment and member surveys. A community needs assessment could further support and validate any changes in role for the WGA.

The literature review identified a gap in scholarly literature pertaining directly to writing organizations and literary arts. As a result, assumptions were made about similarities between the Alberta writing community and its organizations and general not-for-profit organizations and the broader arts sector. There is more research needed to further define the writing community and its social, economic and overall impact on community well-being.

The systems maps were drawn based on participant responses, perspectives and insights as well as the literature reviewed by the researcher. There are opportunities through collaborative community planning and workshops to undertake more rigorous community mapping exercises in the future to refine and validate the maps that include direct participation from the stakeholder and organizations involved.

All findings and conclusions should be considered as moment in time observations. As the community is dynamic and ever changing, any findings and insights are subject to change.

## SUMMARY

The Alberta writing community is thriving and possesses an abundance of writing organizations focused on supporting growth and vibrancy of the community. The WGA currently holds the role of primary arts service organization for writing and literary arts, thereby leading to an unofficial leadership role among writing organizations in Alberta. While its operations are spread across strategic and operational programs and services, such as advocacy and writing workshops, there are many opportunities for the WGA to collaborate and partner to meet its mission and achieve its vision for the writing community.

Through the research conducted, stakeholder organizations within Alberta and Canada generally have a positive perception of the WGA and its role. With that said, stakeholders are looking for more opportunities to collaborate and coordinate meaningfully for the benefit of the community. While there is a sense of shared goals and purpose among organizations in the writing community, shared goals are difficult to articulate. As a leader within the writing community, the WGA has the opportunity to lead this critical conversation and bring together all writing organizations for a coordinated approach to supporting the writers who choose to live and work and create in Alberta.

To do this, the researcher has identified three potential roles for the WGA to assume within the writing community. Factors to consider prior to deciding to change roles include, alignment with current mission and vision, appetite for the role amongst other writing organizations and perceived competition for the role with other organizations. Based on these considerations, two roles remain for the WGA to consider: (1) a Strategic role, that focuses on advocacy, research and celebration, or (2) a Connector role, that focuses on coordinating and connecting writers to organizations for programming.

By choosing either or a hybrid of these roles, the WGA could dedicate existing resources to address a few of the system archetypes that emerged through the systems mapping process. These roles would also shift the WGA's focus away from a competitive programs space and towards other services and functions that are needed within the writing community but are currently not being addressed by other organizations, thereby strengthening its competitive advantage within the community, for the community's benefit in the long-term.

## CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

## INTRODUCTION

Determining the role of an organization is never an easy decision. When the added complexity of effective collaboration within a complex and dynamic system is appended to that decision, it becomes more difficult. As the WGA is a central organization within the Alberta writing community, the decisions made by its board and administration impacts not only its members but the larger writing community. This research has sought to examine opportunities for the WGA to consider as it moves through a time of change.

The recommendations of this report have been developed for consideration by the WGA, by either their Board of Directors or their Executive Director. Each recommendation includes an explanation of intent and scope of the recommendation as well as classification information such as priority, timelines, and purview. Alignment has also been validated with the research conducted by aligning recommendations back to identified findings. Finding 11 was the only finding not addressed by the recommendations as it was determined to be outside the scope of this research and not an appropriate role for the WGA to consider.

Both the primary and secondary research questions and research findings were used to identify recommendations. Recommendations were also evaluated based on feasibility, timeliness and system impact.

The recommendations presented below have relationships between each other. Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 are most effective when decided to be pursued together. Recommendation 4 can be done with or without the pursuit of any of the other recommendations. These relationships are visualized in Figure 17, to the right.

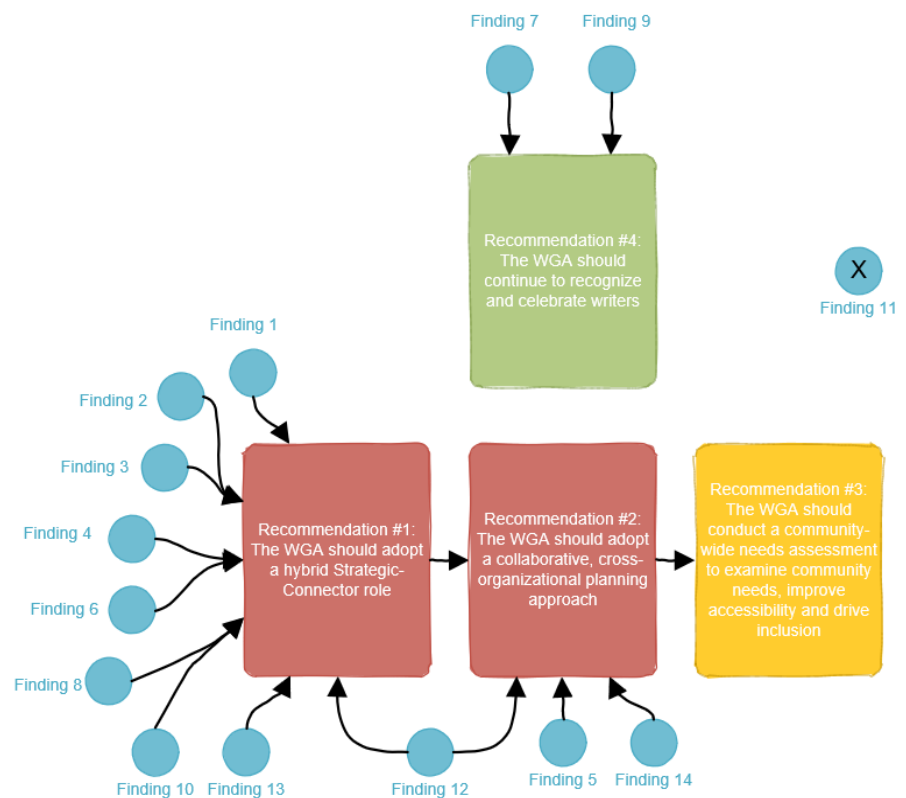


Figure 17 Relationships between recommendations and findings

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### RECOMMENDATION #1: ADOPT A HYBRID STRATEGIC-CONNECTOR ROLE

In response to the primary question, the implementation of this recommendation would see the WGA take on a stronger role in advocacy and introduce a hub-spoke model, where the WGA can facilitate connections between writers and other organizations. The WGA would also take a leadership role in undertaking research on behalf of the writing community and sharing results with organizations for planning and implementation purposes. The WGA would retain programs related to awards and recognition such as the Alberta Literary Awards but would explore opportunities to shift more direct capacity building programs to other organizations within the writing community. There is an existing need within the stakeholder group for more intentional coordination across organization through tactics such as community calendars and articulated shared goals. If the WGA were to assume this role, there is the potential to lessen competition for resources as organizations would deliver less similar services and have more specialised service delivery.

The decision to adopt this role should be endorsed by stakeholders through collaborative planning.

<b>Priority</b>	High	<b>Findings addressed</b>	Primary Research Question
<b>Timeline</b>	12 – 18 months	<b>Purview</b>	Board of Directors

### RECOMMENDATION #2: ADOPT A COLLABORATIVE, CROSS-ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING APPROACH

Stakeholders are interested in having more collaborative and cross-organizational conversations. One way of doing this is by adopting a collaborative planning approach. Currently organizations have similar purposes, audiences, and funding sources. By pursuing a collaborative planning process, decisions can be made early on about who is delivering which services and which grants are being leveraged for what purpose. This approach should lessen competition for financial resources and maximize community participation by reducing overlapping scheduling of events when the same audiences are being targeted. A collaborative, outcome-based planning approach should achieve a shared community vision faster than an uncoordinated approach. This will also improve the writer's experience of navigating the complex system of support available to them.

A cross-organizational strategic plan could be developed, and annual governance meetings could be held to monitor progress and check-in on strategy execution. Quarterly meetings could be held by Executive Directors to discuss logistics, scheduling, and implementation.

<b>Priority</b>	High	<b>Findings addressed</b>	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13
<b>Timeline</b>	12 – 18 months	<b>Purview</b>	Board of Directors

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### RECOMMENDATION #3: CONDUCT A COMMUNITY-WIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT TO EXAMINE COMMUNITY NEEDS, IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY AND DRIVE INCLUSION

Should the WGA assume a hybrid role of Strategic-Connector, one of the responsibilities in their purview would be to conduct community research. One of the first pieces of research to be done could be a community-wide needs assessment. A community-wide needs assessment would include participation from all writing organization membership as well as the general public. It would attempt to evaluate what needs exist within Alberta related to writing services, which communities are underserved and how, and how writing organizations can meet demands from their membership.

Through interviews, feedback from stakeholders included a requirement of the WGA to improve its accessibility and inclusion efforts. A community needs assessment will validate this feedback and provide tangible recommendations on effective ways to address gaps.

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<b>Priority</b>	Medium	<b>Findings addressed</b>	5, 12, 14
<b>Timeline</b>	12 – 24 months	<b>Purview</b>	Executive Director

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### RECOMMENDATION #4: CONTINUE TO RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE WRITERS

Currently the WGA is known for its celebration of writers. Through interviews, they were praised for their ability to recognize individual accomplishments and bring writers together. This work should continue. The first of two findings addressed by this recommendation is that building individual writers help to build community. The second finding acknowledges that the writing community in Alberta is thriving. The WGA should therefore continue to deliver programs they are known for and continue recognizing and celebrating writers.

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<b>Priority</b>	Low	<b>Findings addressed</b>	7, 9
<b>Timeline</b>	0 – 3 months	<b>Purview</b>	Executive Director

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## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Embarking on this research has been exciting and daunting. The writing community in Alberta is one that is thriving and yet, there is little to no study or academic literature directly about it. Writing, in general, is a fairly mysterious art but also so pervasive--it is everywhere in society. The irony of this is exemplified by the number avid readers, books sold and successful bookstores throughout our communities and yet, the idea of being a working writer does not always seem real--but there are writers in Alberta, and very talented and creative ones at that. An industry as foundational to community identity and community building ought to be studied and the organizations that keep it alive too.

The Writers' Guild of Alberta is a central organization within the writing community in Alberta and operates exceptionally within a complex, dynamic system. With its history for celebration and support of writers, the WGA is uniquely positioned to have a strong positive impact on writers in Alberta. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition to a new Executive Director, the WGA was looking for a way to evolve and continue meeting community needs. Through this research the broad question of its role in fostering a vibrant writing community was examined. Recommendations were drafted but this is not the end. There are more questions still to be answered about the writing community. The Alberta writing community is so much broader and more intricate than one organization or the relationship between its organizations.

As identified by one of the unexpected findings, the arts and cultural sector in Alberta is missing a professional development organization. More questions could be considered on the need or benefits of pursuing the creation of such an organization for Alberta's arts and culture sector, and specifically the writing community. There are also opportunities to conduct more participative research and strategic planning within the writing community. Engaging the writers in shaping the future of their community is essential to ongoing success of the community and fostering future growth of the craft.

This research underscores the power and influence of a single organization within a system and the positive impact it can create for many. Through leadership and intention, the WGA can create a brighter future for writers across Alberta.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT EMAIL SCRIPT

#### EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER EMAIL (GROUPS 2 & 3)

Subject: Alberta's Writing Community - Research Participation Opportunity

Hello,

My name is Nicole Duley. I am currently a graduate student at the University of Victoria completing a Master of Arts in Community Development. As part of my degree requirement, I am conducting a research project. I am currently seeking participants for this research, and you have been identified by my client as a potential participant.

#### **About my research**

My research project is titled, "Systems-mapping Alberta's Writing Community: The Writers' Guild of Alberta's Role in Collaborative Community Development". I am working with the Writers' Guild of Alberta as a client to map and analyse Alberta's writing community. The intention is to produce a report that the WGA's Board of Directors can utilize to inform upcoming discussions and decisions about the role the WGA plays within Alberta's writing community.

Through this research I will be interviewing a number of organizations within Alberta and across Canada to understand the complex system that is Alberta's writing community. As a member of this community, your perspective and experiences are vital to mapping an accurate representation of the system with all its strengths and weaknesses.

#### **Next Steps**

Please let me know if you have any questions about this research that would help you decide whether to participate or not is the right decision for you. I would be happy to provide you additional information.

If you are interested in participating, please reply to this email and I will coordinate with you to schedule a time for your interview. The interview should take between 30-40 minutes to complete and will be conducted virtually through Zoom. I can also provide you questions in advance if you would like to prepare for our interview. (This is not required.)

Attached to this email is a Participant Recruitment Guide with additional information about this research project. Additionally, I have provided a consent form, which you can review, sign and return to me should we wish to participate.

Thank you in advance for your time and interest in this research.

Sincerely,

Nicole Duley, MACD Student, University of Victoria

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**WGA STAFF EMAIL (GROUP 1)**

Subject: Alberta's Writing Community - Research Participation Opportunity

Hello,

My name is Nicole Duley. I am currently a graduate student at the University of Victoria completing a Master of Arts in Community Development. As part of my degree requirement, I am conducting a research project. I am currently seeking participants for this research, and you have been identified by my client as a potential participant.

**About my research**

My research project is titled, "Systems-mapping Alberta's Writing Community: The Writers' Guild of Alberta's Role in Collaborative Community Development". I am working with the Writers' Guild of Alberta as a client to map and analyse Alberta's writing community. The intention is to produce a report that the WGA's Board of Directors can utilize to inform upcoming discussions and decisions about the role the WGA plays within Alberta's writing community.

Through this research I will be interviewing a number of organizations within Alberta and across Canada to understand the complex system that is Alberta's writing community. As an employee of the WGA, your perspective and experiences are vital to mapping an accurate representation of the system with all its strengths and weaknesses. With that being said, you are under no obligation to participate.

**Next Steps**

Please let me know if you have any questions about this research that would help you decide whether to participate or not is the right decision for you. I would be happy to provide you additional information.

If you are interested in participating, please reply to this email and I will coordinate with you to schedule a time for your interview. The interview should take between 30-40 minutes to complete and will be conducted virtually through Zoom. I can also provide you questions in advance if you would like to prepare for our interview. (This is not required.)

Attached to this email is a Participant Recruitment Guide with additional information about this research project. Additionally, I have provided a consent form, which you can review, sign and return to me should we wish to participate.

Thank you in advance for your time and interest in this research.

Sincerely,

Nicole Duley, MACD Student, University of Victoria

**APPENDIX B: WGA STAFF INTERVIEW SCRIPT (GROUP 1)****INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS**

I am a graduate student at the University of Victoria studying community development. Part of my program requires me to undertake a research project. I have partnered with the Writers' Guild of Alberta (WGA) to map the current system surrounding Alberta's writing community and conduct a stakeholder analysis of existing organizations that interact with the WGA. Through this project I will be collecting information from WGA staff and stakeholders. For this project and specific to today's interview, I am interested in identifying functions, relationships, and systems dynamics within Alberta's writing community.

As part of this research, I am interviewing several stakeholders of the Writers' Guild of Alberta to understand the relationships between organizations participating in the larger writing community within Alberta. I would like you to comment on your experiences and ask for your ideas and insights. This interview will look at three aspects to define the system underpinning Alberta's writing community:

1. Understanding Identity
2. Understanding Interactions
3. Understanding Motivations

Unless otherwise stated, please respond to questions based on your perspective and experiences.

The questions I will ask are a mix of open-ended and scaled questions. Unless otherwise stated, please respond to questions based on your perspective and experiences with the Writers' Guild of Alberta and within the writing community, both nationally and within Alberta. I intend to take your responses, and those of other people I interview, and develop a report for the Writers' Guild of Alberta as a requirement for my degree completion. The Writers' Guild of Alberta is intending to use the report to evaluate their current role and determine if and how it should be changed.

Please feel free to ask me for clarification throughout this interview. You are also able to decline a response if you do not feel comfortable answering a question.

**DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROJECT, PROCESS OR INTERVIEW?**

As a current employee of the WGA, you are not obligated to participate in this research. Choosing to not participate will not result in reprimand, however your participation is encouraged because of your unique perspective on the writing community in Alberta.

As noted in the consent form provided before this interview, there are specific risks to participating in this research as an employee of the WGA. These risks include:

- Loss of privacy due to small number of staff being interviewed
- Risks to employment for staff

These risks are deemed to be minimal or negligible, however I want to acknowledge that they are present. As a result, there is an option to request all your responses remain as

anonymous as possible. Additionally, you are also free to decline any questions I may pose if you feel unsafe or uncomfortable responding to them. This interview is not part of any performance appraisal, and you are not being tested. It is important to make these intentions clear because this research is being conducted for the Executive Director, Giorgia Severini, who is in a position of authority over you as an employee.

**DO YOU CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH WITH THE INTENT AND SCOPE OF THE PROJECT AS STATED ABOVE?** *At the end of the interview, you will be provided an opportunity to withdraw your consent to participate, if necessary.*

*DO YOU CONSENT TO THIS INTERVIEW BEING RECORDED FOR THE PURPOSES OF PRODUCING AN INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT THAT WILL AID IN THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF YOUR RESPONSES?*

**LET'S BEGIN.**

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## UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY

*The purpose of this section will be to determine the purpose, aims and connections of existing organizations to be able to analyse areas of common interest, overlap in services and membership and identify any areas of conflict or competition.*

1. **Role with the Writing Community.** Can you tell me a bit about your role and the role of the WGA within the writing community in Alberta?

Probing Questions:

- a. What is your organization's focus and purpose?
- b. What are the main ways your organization fulfills that purpose?
- c. How long has your organization been active in the writing community?
- d. What kinds of services does your organization offer?

2. **Target Audience.** Who are the primary members or audience for the WGA? Who does the WGA serve?

Probing questions:

- a. Who can access your services?
- b. Are your members part of specific genre or style of writing?
- c. Do you provide services to both amateur and professional writers?
- d. Are there specific people that your services are targeted towards? (Identify types of intersectionality)

3. **Funding Considerations.** What is the primary source of funding for the WGA?

Probing questions:

- a. Does your organization collect membership fees?
- b. Does your organization charge fees for service?
- c. Does your organization receive grant funding?

4. **Access to granting dollars.** How would you describe the ease of access to grant funding for literary arts?

Probing Questions:

- a. What types of grant funding does your organization receive or dispense?
- b. How stable or consistent is grant funding?
- c. Is the current available grant funding sufficient?
- d. Are there types of grants you would be interested in but they are not available or you do not qualify?

5. **Movement of funding through the system.** What types of expenses does the WGA have?

Probing Questions:

- a. Does the WGA offer bursaries, subsidies, or awards?
- b. Do you provide grants to other organizations?
- c. Do you provide sponsorship to other organizations?

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## UNDERSTANDING INTERACTIONS

*The purpose of this section will be to determine the existing relationship between the WGA and other organizations. This will be used to further develop any connections and understanding the current state of the connection.*

6. **Connections within the Writing Community.** Can you tell me about any organizations that the WGA interacts with, within the writing community?

Probing Questions:

- a. What is the nature of your interactions with those organizations? (partner, sponsor, parent-child organization)
- b. Are there any Alberta specific organizations that your organization interacts with?
- c. What has been the nature of these interactions? (Collaborative, partnerships, competitive)
- d. Would you consider any services offered by the WGA as redundant or competing with these other organizations?
- e. Do you consider your organization and the WGA well aligned in terms of goals and services?

7. **Effectiveness of the WGA.** The Writers' Guild of Alberta's mission states "We support and advocate for all writers and provide opportunities to grow and connect while enriching Alberta's culture and economy."

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning "Not at all" and 5 meaning "Exceeds expectations", how well does the WGA currently meet its mission?

Probing Questions:

- a. (If scored a 5) What does the WGA do that exceeds your expectations?
- b. (If scored less than a 5) How could this score be improved from your perspective?
- c. Is there a role you would like the WGA to play within Alberta's writing community that it currently does not?

8. **Effectiveness of the WGA.** The Writers' Guild of Alberta's vision states "A thriving writing community that is diverse, valued, and celebrated."

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning "Not at all" and 5 meaning "Exceeds expectations", how well does the WGA currently pursue its vision?

Probing Questions:

- a. (If scored less than a 5) What could the WGA do differently to better pursue its vision?

- b. Does this vision conflict with any of its current programming?
- c. Are there synergies that could be pursued with other your organizations to achieve this vision? How?

9. **Future Relationship Opportunities.** In the future, how would you like others to describe their relationship with the Writers' Guild of Alberta?

Probing Questions:

- a. How is this different from their current relationship?
- b. How would this help strengthen Alberta's writing community?

10. **Feedback Loops.** Can you describe for me how a program or service offered to the writing community in Alberta has impacted the writing community? You can describe a collective example or an individual example.

Probing questions:

- a. What type of changes have you witnessed after a program or service was delivered?
- b. From your perspective, was the writing community strengthened or weakened as a result?

11. **Constraints.** What do you think is limiting, impeding, or constraining the writing community in Alberta, if at all?

Probing Questions:

- a. What is your perception of the number of organizations operating in the literary arts industry?
- b. Do organizations typically collaborate?
- c. Are there boundaries that limit the writing community from thriving?

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## UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATIONS

*The purpose of this section will be to determine any opportunities or challenges perceived by the organization as it relates to the writing community in Alberta and how the organization engages within the system.*

12. **Paradigms.** From your perspective, how do organizations nurture the writing community in Alberta?

Probing Questions:

- a. Are there common goals throughout the writing community? What are they?
- b. Is there a unique context to being a writer in Alberta that needs to be acknowledged and addressed?

13. **Current State.** How would you describe the overall health of the writing community in Alberta?

Probing Questions:

- a. How do you see writing organizations working together or competing in the current environment?
  - b. How does the WGA contribute to the health of the writing community?
  - c. Are there programs or services that would help improve or strengthen the overall health of the writing community?
14. **Success Factors.** How could the writing community in Alberta be better served in the future?

Probing Questions:

- a. What areas of the writing community are currently being underserved or are unmet?
- b. How do you see the WGA contributing to meeting that community need?

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## CLOSING

*The purpose of this section is to wrap up the interview and provide an opportunity to share any additional information or considerations with the researcher.*

15. **General Questions.** Is there anything else you would like to tell me about Alberta's writing community?

Probing Questions:

- a. Are there any organizations that you would recommend I reach out to to participate in this research?
- b. Do you have any questions about this research now that this interview has been completed?
- c. Do you maintain your consent to participate in this research project?
- d. Now that you have completed the interview, do you wish to amend your consent form in regard to anonymity? How?

**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING.**

**APPENDIX C: EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SCRIPT (GROUPS 2 & 3)****INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS**

I am a graduate student at the University of Victoria studying community development. Part of my program requires me to undertake a research project. I have partnered with the Writers' Guild of Alberta (WGA) to map the current system surrounding Alberta's writing community and conduct a stakeholder analysis of existing organizations that interact with the WGA. Through this project I will be collecting information from WGA staff and stakeholders. For this project and specific to today's interview, I am interested in identifying functions, relationships, and systems dynamics within Alberta's writing community.

As part of this research, I am interviewing several stakeholders of the Writers' Guild of Alberta to understand the relationships between organizations participating in the larger writing community within Alberta. I would like you to comment on your experiences and ask for your ideas and insights. This interview will look at three aspects to define the system underpinning Alberta's writing community:

4. Understanding Identity
5. Understanding Interactions
6. Understanding Motivations

Unless otherwise stated, please respond to questions based on your perspective and experiences.

The questions I will ask are a mix of open-ended and scaled questions. Unless otherwise stated, please respond to questions based on your perspective and experiences with the Writers' Guild of Alberta and within the writing community, both nationally and within Alberta. I intend to take your responses, and those of other people I interview, and develop a report for the Writers' Guild of Alberta as a requirement for my degree completion. The Writers' Guild of Alberta is intending to use the report to evaluate their current role and determine if and how it should be changed.

Please feel free to ask me for clarification throughout this interview. You are also able to decline a response if you do not feel comfortable answering a question.

**DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROJECT, PROCESS OR INTERVIEW?**

**DO YOU CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH WITH THE INTENT AND SCOPE OF THE PROJECT AS STATED ABOVE?** *At the end of the interview, you will be provided an opportunity to withdraw your consent to participate, if necessary.*

*DO YOU CONSENT TO THIS INTERVIEW BEING RECORDED FOR THE PURPOSES OF PRODUCING AN INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT THAT WILL AID IN THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF YOUR RESPONSES?*

**LET'S BEGIN.**

---

## UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY

*The purpose of this section will be to determine the purpose, aims and connections of existing organizations to be able to analyse areas of common interest, overlap in services and membership and identify any areas of conflict or competition.*

16. **Role with the Writing Community.** Can you tell me a bit about your role and the role of your organization within the writing community in Alberta?

Probing Questions:

- a. What is your organization's focus and purpose?
- b. What are the main ways your organization fulfills that purpose?
- c. How long has your organization been active in the writing community?
- d. What kinds of services does your organization offer?

17. **Target Audience.** Who are the primary members or audience for your organization? Who does your organization serve?

Probing questions:

- a. Who can access your services?
- b. Are your members part of specific genre or style of writing?
- c. Do you provide services to both amateur and professional writers?
- d. Are there specific people that your services are targeted towards? (Identify types of intersectionality)

18. **Funding Considerations.** What is the primary source of funding for your organization?

Probing questions:

- a. Does your organization collect membership fees?
- b. Does your organization charge fees for service?
- c. Does your organization receive grant funding?

19. **Access to granting dollars.** How would you describe the ease of access to grant funding for literary arts?

Probing Questions:

- a. What types of grant funding does your organization receive or dispense?
- b. How stable or consistent is grant funding?
- c. Is the current available grant funding sufficient?
- d. Are there types of grants you would be interested in but they are not available or you do not qualify?

20. **Movement of funding through the system.** What types of expenses does your organization have?

Probing Questions:

- a. Does your organization offer bursaries, subsidies, or awards?
- b. Do you provide grants to other organizations?
- c. Do you provide sponsorship to other organizations?

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## UNDERSTANDING INTERACTIONS

*The purpose of this section will be to determine the existing relationship between your organization and the WGA. This will be used to further develop any connections and understanding the current state of the connection.*

21. **Connections within the Writing Community.** Can you tell me about any organizations that your organization interacts with, within the writing community?

Probing Questions:

- f. What is the nature of your interactions with those organizations? (partner, sponsor, parent-child organization)
- g. Are there any Alberta specific organizations that your organization interacts with?

22. **Relationship to the WGA.** Can you tell me about how you/your organization has interacted with the Writers' Guild of Alberta in the past?

Probing Questions:

- a. What has been the nature of these interactions? (Collaborative, partnerships, competitive)
- b. Would you consider any services offered by your organization and the WGA as redundant or competing?
- c. Do you consider your organization and the WGA well aligned in terms of goals and services?

23. **Effectiveness of the WGA.** The Writers' Guild of Alberta's mission states "We support and advocate for all writers and provide opportunities to grow and connect while enriching Alberta's culture and economy."

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning "Not at all" and 5 meaning "Exceeds expectations", how well does the WGA currently meet its mission?

Probing Questions:

- d. (If scored a 5) What does the WGA do that exceeds your expectations?
- e. (If scored less than a 5) How could this score be improved from your perspective?
- f. Is there a role you would like the WGA to play within Alberta's writing community that it currently does not?

24. **Effectiveness of the WGA.** The Writers' Guild of Alberta's vision states "A thriving writing community that is diverse, valued, and celebrated."

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning “Not at all” and 5 meaning “Exceeds expectations”, how well does the WGA currently pursue its vision?

Probing Questions:

- d. (If scored less than a 5) What could the WGA do differently to better pursue its vision?
- e. Does this vision conflict with any of its current programming?
- f. Are there synergies that could be pursued with your organization to achieve this vision? How?

25. **Future Relationship Opportunities.** In the future, how would you like to be able to describe your relationship with the Writers' Guild of Alberta?

Probing Questions:

- c. How is this different from your current relationship?
- d. How would this help strengthen Alberta's writing community?

26. **Feedback Loops.** Can you describe for me how a program or service offered to the writing community in Alberta has impacted the writing community? You can describe a collective example or an individual example.

Probing questions:

- a. What type of changes have you witnessed after a program or service was delivered?
- b. From your perspective, was the writing community strengthened or weakened as a result?

27. **Constraints.** What do you think is limiting, impeding, or constraining the writing community in Alberta, if at all?

Probing Questions:

- a. What is your perception of the number of organizations operating in the literary arts industry?
- b. Do organizations typically collaborate?
- c. Are there boundaries that limit the writing community from thriving?

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## UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATIONS

*The purpose of this section will be to determine any opportunities or challenges perceived by the organization as it relates to the writing community in Alberta and how the organization engages within the system.*

28. **Paradigms.** From your perspective, how do organizations nurture the writing community in Alberta?

Probing Questions:

- a. Are there common goals throughout the writing community? What are they?
  - b. Is there a unique context to being a writer in Alberta that needs to be acknowledged and addressed?
29. **Current State.** How would you describe the overall health of the writing community in Alberta?

Probing Questions:

- d. How do you see writing organizations working together or competing in the current environment?
  - e. How does the WGA contribute to the health of the writing community?
  - f. Are there programs or services that would help improve or strengthen the overall health of the writing community?
30. **Success Factors.** How could the writing community in Alberta be better served in the future?

Probing Questions:

- c. What areas of the writing community are currently being underserved or are unmet?
- d. How do you see the WGA contributing to meeting that community need?

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## CLOSING

*The purpose of this section is to wrap up the interview and provide an opportunity to share any additional information or considerations with the researcher.*

1. **General Questions.** Is there anything else you would like to tell me about Alberta's writing community?

Probing Questions:

- e. Are there any organizations that you would recommend I reach out to participate in this research?
- f. Do you have any questions about this research now that this interview has been completed?
- g. Do you maintain your consent to participate in this research project?

**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING.**

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT GUIDE



**Systems-mapping Alberta's Writing  
Community: The Writers' Guild of Alberta's  
Role in Collaborative Community  
Development**

*Participant Recruitment Guide*

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