

WRITE DENVER TOOLKIT

by Lighthouse Writers Workshop with Dan Manzanares



LIGHTHOUSE
WRITERS WORKSHOP

**CREAT
IVE EX
CHANGE**
SPRINGBOARD FOR THE ARTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Write Denver Toolkit, by Lighthouse Writers Workshop with Dan Manzanares

Community Story Toolkit, by Handbarrow Theater with Mark Kidd

Lightning Rod Toolkit, by Patrick's Cabaret with Scott Artley, Kat Purcell and Marcela

Growing Up in the Arts Workshops Toolkit, by Springfield Regional Arts Council
with Rachel Johnson



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This work modeled on the Write Denver Toolkit by Lighthouse Writers Workshop with Dan Manzanares. The toolkit was created in partnership with Springboard for the Arts via Creative Exchange. www.springboardexchange.org

Cover image: Cover Image: Hard Times Writing Workshop at Denver Botanic Gardens. Photo by Amanda Tipton.

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INTRODUCTION

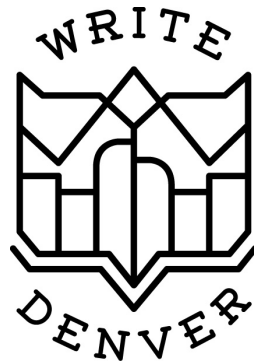
Lighthouse Writers Workshop's Write Denver program uses community activities and workshops to get people of all ages and backgrounds writing. The short stories, personal essays, poems, and other forms of writing generated at these sessions are then turned into literary-visual art—haikus on parking signs and poetry wall sculptures—and placed around the city for others to experience and enjoy. With this toolkit, we're hoping other organizations will create their own community writing programs, encouraging imagination and elevating voices that aren't always heard, and giving those voices a platform in the form of in-class peer sharing as well as public art displays.

Write Denver is a creative writing and story sharing project started in July 2015 that celebrates and records the individual voices in our community. Write Denver speaks to our innate need for self-expression by capturing and promoting the stories of Denver, which is transforming before our eyes. Write Denver builds a greater sense of civic pride and understanding, cutting across typical boundaries of ethnicity, economic class, geography, gender, sexual orientation, and age. We believe that by encouraging people in our neighborhoods and communities to tell and share their stories, we not only compile an

important literary map of the city, but also define and embrace what it means to be alive in the world right now.

Working with partners ranging from larger cultural organizations (like the Denver Botanic Gardens, on the cover of the toolkit) as well as individual artists, writers, and educators, Write Denver's programming takes what Lighthouse does best—giving people tools to write stories—and uses those tools to connect with people who might not even realize they can be writers of poetry, prose, songs, or plays. The writing they produce is mostly short, mere “postcards” or “snapshots” of this moment in time. But our facilitators work with them to refine what they've done, and then create customized installations in each community. The result has been a variety of surprising and joyful reading experiences for passersby, with writings as street-parking signs, word murals, poetrees, chalk writing, “talking trees,” wheat pastes, giant word tiles, megaphone readings, anthologies, and more. Some installations are permanent and some are temporary, lending a sense of timeliness to the work. We celebrate Write Denver unveilings with video and audio recordings, photography, and social media. Each installation lives in perpetuity on the Write Denver website, so anyone can become a part of the conversation.

Write Denver is a true occasion for collective community art-making, a key part of Lighthouse's mission to ensure that literature maintains its proper prominence in the culture, and that individuals achieve their fullest potential as artists and human beings. Its process can be replicated in three steps.



The Write Denver process (in three easy steps):

1. Write Denver hosts free events or workshops in the community.
2. Participants from those events or workshops submit work to Write Denver (onsite or at writedenver.org).
3. Submitted writings are selected, curated, and published as public art displays with the goal of creating an audience for the writing.

That's it! The rest of the toolkit fleshes out the requirements of these basic steps.



Word on the Street event at The Galleria in the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. **Photo by Dave Townsend.**

VALUES/CORE PRINCIPLES

We're loathe to tell anyone to follow the rules, because rules are meant to be broken. But consider this a guideline of best practices that we've developed based both on our core values as an organization as well as lived and learned experience.

Be excellent facilitators

A writing instructor cares about the correct presentation of literary material (lesson and prompts), whereas facilitators are experts at presenting material AND creating safe spaces and building community. An instructor develops intellectuality, which is good, but a facilitator using the literary arts encourages self-expression AND group-expression along with intellectual connection to material. A good teacher/instructor, therefore, can be a poor facilitator, especially when it comes to community education. A good facilitator seamlessly juggles all of the differing moods and expectations of the participants while at the same time inspiring them to write their best work. Find experienced facilitators and don't let go of them.

Build strong partnerships

Building sustainable partnerships with artists (in both the literary and visual arts) and organizations will determine how successful your

Write Denver project becomes. Weak partnerships create weak programs. Go in 50/50 as much as possible, especially when it comes to marketing and money. When everyone has skin in the game everyone cares more to ensure the program thrives.

Pursue grants

Grants are key for funding the project, but they also give the events and workshops a time-frame to get work done. As an added benefit, receiving a grant validates the program and makes you commit to it on a higher level.

Get out of your comfort zone

As quickly as possible! Community building is sticky work that takes time. Playing it safe with a project like Write Denver doesn't open up the space for authentic community and civic engagement, and instead can have the opposite effect.

Seek out and support diversity

Write Denver lives and breathes on the fact that everyone has a story to tell and should be able to tell it (within the realms of common decency, which should be applied in a group setting). We've found the more diverse a group of writers, the more empathic their stories become.

Be adaptable

In other words, be comfortable learning on the job. If you're reading this toolkit, more than likely you or your organization hasn't embarked upon a city-of-letters project, which is totally fine, but that also means learning on the job is a must. Passion and intelligence go a long way; however, part of being adaptable is listening to what a community of writers needs and tweaking workshop lesson plans or community events in response to these community requests. Some requests might take you out of your comfort zone, which is a good thing.

Cultivate stability

Write Denver's most successful workshops are held either weekly or bi-monthly without having a proposed end date. This structure allows stability for a community of writers. Stability allows creative growth to occur. One-offs or annual get-togethers are better reserved for events. Write Denver doesn't want to open a door into a community and then close it on them abruptly (in the nonprofit world this is called "vanishing door syndrome"). Have stability in mind and plan your grants/projects/events accordingly.

Expect and accept failure

You will fail. In fact, big successes usually only arrive through big failures. You won't get a grant, or participants won't connect to your program, or no one will show up to your event in the first place, etc. It's a good thing. Failure keeps us sharp and motivates us to do better. It also means we're risking something important. When failure happens, let it in, but don't dwell in it. Use failure by learning from it. Then get back to work.

Pay everyone

Artists, writers, contractors, photographers, videographers, staffers, facilitators. Everyone. When the free workshops are being taught, pay the instructors. When participants' writing is published, pay them. When you need an event covered by a photographer, pay her. Add a line in your grant's budget for all the people to get paid. Want to create an anthology featuring 25 writers from a homeless shelter? Pay all 25.

Deepen relationships

Avoid one-off events and partnerships if possible. Most people can't commit to strangers on a deep level. Trust is gained over time—and that is definitely true with creative writing or any artistic pursuit. Return to a neighborhood or community as much as possible—be it with weekly or bi-weekly workshops or annual events. The writing over time will only improve.

Saying "no."

As soon as word about Write Denver spread, we were inundated with collaboration requests for event and workshop partnerships. We love the work so we said "yes" to a lot of these opportunities over the course of almost two years, and as a result became burnt out. Be strategic with your yeses, and don't be afraid to stay within capacity by saying "no" to people or organizations.

Have fun!

This is your chance to bring writing and voice to communities who sometimes have little of both. It can be difficult work but there's also joy in it. Live in the joy as much as possible.

WHAT YOU NEED FOR THE PROJECT

To reiterate, the Write Denver process works like this:

1. Write Denver hosts free events or workshops in the community.
2. Participants from those events or workshops submit work to Write Denver (onsite or at writedenver.org).
3. Submitted writings are selected, curated, and published as public art displays with the goal of creating an audience for the writing.

Writing is produced by the people of Denver in two main ways:

EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS

WHAT A WRITE DENVER EVENT NEEDS

Step 1

Hosting a free community event:

- Partner
- Grant [see sample on pg. 27] – Cost per event is dependent on partner agreement and grant(s)
- Event coordination from Lighthouse staff
- Volunteer support (day-of tasks, schlepping, greeters, etc.)

Step 2

Participants submit writing:

- Differs from event to event, but can include poetrees [see image on pg. 20], word tiles [see images on pgs. 5, 10 & 14], postcards, regular sheets of paper, oral recordings, social media posts, website submissions, and more. The more creative you are in how you collect the writing the easier it will be for people who don't consider themselves writers to submit their writing.

Step 3

Curated submissions are “published” as public art displays:

- Varies, but can include parking signs [see image on pg. 17], wheatpastes [see image on pg. 22], sculptures, and more. Again, the more creative, yet accessible, you are in your displays and installations the easier it will be to create an audience for the writing.
- Press release [see sample on pg. 29]

How many events are needed to collect enough material to do Step 3?

One Write Denver event can yield dozens, sometimes hundreds of submissions, as was the case with our Word on the Street event, in which 1,000 people participated [See image on pg. 5].

WHAT A WRITE DENVER WORKSHOP NEEDS

Step 1

Hosting a free workshop:

- Partner
- Partner MOU [see sample on pg. 30]
- Letter of Intent (for grant) [see sample on pg. 31] – Cost per workshop depends on partner agreement and grant(s)
- Facilitator contract [see sample on pg. 34]
- Support from Lighthouse staff, faculty, and board of directors
- Volunteers (in-class editors)

Step 2

Participants submit writing:

- Mostly via email to their workshop facilitator, Lighthouse’s community programs coordinator, or the Write Denver website
- Depending on the community, sometimes a facilitator photographs the writing/ submission and transcribes it

Step 3

Curated submissions are “published” as public art displays:

- See Step 3 from “Event Needs”

How many workshops are needed to publish materials?

We’d say no fewer than six weekly workshops are needed to cultivate a community of writers in order for them to create work that can be published as public art displays, and the more weeks in a row the better. Some Denver community members, such as those experiencing homelessness, sometimes take weeks to gain the confidence needed to submit work to Write Denver. In our experience, six weeks seems to be the magic number where participants break through and begin trusting the group enough to consider sharing their work publicly in the Write Denver way.

How does Write Denver set an event budget?

- **Staffing** We take the current hourly pay (community programs coordinator) and salary (operations manager, communications coordinator, etc.) and the amount of work (timeline) it takes to project manage the event from start to finish for a total.
- **Materials** We price out as many options as we can, looking for both quality and a reasonable cost.
- **Venue** Mostly, we partner with organizations that comp us the venue, or provide it to us as an in-kind donation.
- **Documentation** We contract a photographer and/or videographer to record Write Denver events. The cost is usually \$100-\$150 per hour.
- **Volunteer hours** We figure in how many volunteers we need plus their hours and use the latest value of a volunteer hour (\$24.69/hr. in 2018) to calculate a total.

How does Write Denver set a workshop budget?

- **Staffing** [See above “event budget.”]
- **Facilitators** We take into account hours per session plus prep time to come up with their fee and ask the partner to cover half of it. Most Write Denver facilitators are paid \$125/session, while one is paid \$175/session due to her background (MA and social work) and the length of time (two years) she has worked for the program.
- **Materials/venue/refreshments** Provided by partner: Denver Public Library, Jefferson County Public Library, Colorado Women’s Correctional Facility all comp Write Denver these items.
- **Documentation** Occasionally, we’ll hire someone to document a workshop in order to send images of the class to funders. [See above cost under “event budget.”]
- **Volunteer hours** [see above cost under “event budget.”]
-

WRITE DENVER ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS

Here is a breakdown of the organizational needs of Write Denver as well as what made the project a success:

A literary center

Write Denver is lucky in that Lighthouse Writers Workshop is its parent organization. Lighthouse was in its eighteenth year when it conceived of the Write Denver project. Write Denver was able to draw from the experience of Lighthouse’s staff, faculty, and board. That said, launching and sustaining Write Denver had its challenges. The project was new and went through plenty of growing pains. Still, in 2015, a basic infrastructure was in place providing stability for Write Denver to take risks. If you don’t live in a city that has a literary center, don’t worry, this toolkit is still for you! You can develop a program by planning and budgeting for the following people:



Word on the Street event at the Cherry Creek Arts Festival. Photo by Dan Manzanaras.

- Staff
- Facilitators (sometimes one and the same with staff)
- Venues (unless you get them for free through a partner org, for example)
- Contributors (writers whose work you “publish” as literary-visual art)
- Artists or contractors who create the art displays

A budget means applying for grants. In our experience, funders more often than not love the concept of Write Denver. Wherever you are—Oakland, Austin, Tampa—we’re confident if you follow the toolkit’s guidelines that funds will become available for Write Oakland, Write Austin, Write Tampa, etc.

Staff

Write Denver is supported by Lighthouse’s executive director, development director, community programs coordinator (also Lighthouse’s volunteer coordinator), operations manager, and communications coordinator. Auxiliary support includes Lighthouse’s program director, two program coordinators, members from the board of directors, and Lighthouse volunteers.

Each staff member has their own area of expertise from marketing and grant writing to event coordination and leadership. This is Write Denver’s distribution of labor, which also acts as a system of checks and balances for which events and workshops Write Denver pursues. An individual can only wear so many hats. If you work for a large or medium-sized organization, get as many staffers on your Write Denver team as possible. If you work for a smaller organization or are an individual put these job titles in your budget and hire people to fill them.

Our current staffing includes:

- Executive director: provides the vision for Write Denver and its scope and assigns roles
- Development director: researches and writes grants
- Community programs coordinator: delivers vision to the facilitators and community, forms partnerships with individual writers and artists as well as organizations, is the bridge between Write Denver’s mission and its public implementations (events, workshops, and art installations)
- Operations manager: tracks all revenue and expenses
- Volunteer coordinator: manages all volunteers at events and makes call-outs for weekly workshop in-class editors
- Communications coordinator: writes and/or signs off on all public communications—social media posts, press releases, flyers, posters, postcards, website copy, etc.
- Program director, program coordinators, board of directors, and volunteers support the Write Denver team, especially the community programs coordinator, as needed

Faculty

Write Denver draws its facilitators from the larger Lighthouse pool of working writers, teachers, and facilitators (around 90 in total) who know the craft of writing as well as how to inspire people to produce their best work while feeling like they’re part of a literary community. These faculty members are published poets, memoirists, novelists, hybrid writers, and much more. Their range of experience is indispensable, especially when it comes to pairing them up to whatever flavor of Write Denver event or workshop presents itself. Research your local authors and tap those with the skill set and passion for community education. Cultivate this network of writers.

Write Denver's current faculty requirements:

- Have earned a master's or MFA in creative writing, or Ph.D. in literature, or are well-published in their genre(s), or have experience in community education and outreach
- Are dedicated teachers and have experience facilitating workshops with people with diverse backgrounds as well as different learning styles and barriers

Volunteers

Don't be afraid to ask for volunteer help. You'll be surprised how many people come from a community outreach background. If you work for a nonprofit, you can offset volunteer hours.

To volunteer, we require:

- No criminal history
- Writing and editing experience
- Basic customer service experience

Partners

Partners who share Write Denver's vision have been key for both the short-term success of one-off events and long term success of weekly workshops. For example, Write Denver recently celebrated its two-year anniversary with its partner, the Denver Public Library, for the collaborative program Hard Times Writing Workshop geared for library patrons who are experiencing homelessness, extreme poverty, or mental instability. The workshop meets weekly at the central branch in downtown Denver and has far exceeded its initial goals. The reason? The strength of Write Denver's partnership with DPL. Hard Times ended up setting the standard of Write Denver adult outreach workshops.

We've "franchised" its model for these other communities in and around the city: women transitioning from prison, refugees and New Americans, seniors (older adults), cancer patients and their caregivers, women and transgender individuals day shelters, and veterans.

We've found this to be true: the stronger the partnership, the more successful the event or workshop. One result of a strong partnership is better writing. When people feel comfortable to artistically express themselves it's usually because the facilitator feels comfortable. This in turn is due to the venue where the writing is taking place. Hence, a good partnership trickles down through the facilitator to the participants.

Partner Requirements for Write Denver Events (one-off or annually):

- Help with marketing and promotion
- Uphold the conditions of the grant
- Keep in good communications with community programs coordinator

Partner Requirements for Write Denver Workshops (weekly or monthly):

- Pay at least 50% of the Write Denver facilitator fee
- Provide materials (journals and pens) for participants
- Provide refreshments for participants
- Comp Write Denver the facility fee
- Help with marketing and promotion
- Keep in good communications with community programs coordinator

Here is a breakdown of easy lifts and pain points for Write Denver events:

EASY LIFTS	PAIN POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anticipated expenses. Grants here are key in that they force you to stay within budget.• Partnerships. A current trend is happening in the arts and cultural world where regardless of an organization's mission (Botanic Gardens, Art Museum, Architectural Foundation, Historical Society) the directors of these organizations want to "tell the story" of their community members, usually down to the neighborhood. Write Denver to this day has to do very little advertising to partners—they either contact us to partner with their events or say yes without hesitation when we ask to partner with them.• Event turnout. Our best turnouts have come from Write Denver "popping-up" at our partners established events instead of being the focal point (the headlining activity) of said event. Examples include popping-up our poetrees for a couple hours at a First Friday Art Walk, popping-up our "Word on the Street" activity in front an incoming crowd going to see a show at the Denver Center of the Performing Arts [See image on pg.5], and popping up at the annual Cherry Creek Arts Festival [See image on pg.20]. Between those three events, thousands of people saw the poetrees and word tiles, hundreds submitted writing, and dozens were published.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saying yes. Saying yes too much to partner events took its toll on the Write Denver team in two major ways: physically and concerning time management. Some of the Write Denver team became burnt out by the sheer physicality of the work, for example, off-site set up and break down of the poetrees and word tiles to the tune of four times in one month. Time management for our other job duties became an issue. Regular tasks weren't being completed in a timely manner, and these inefficiencies ended up affecting Lighthouse's bottom line.• Keeping up with submissions, i.e., Step 3.

These were easy lifts because Denver's arts and cultural organizations were starving to have Lighthouse, a literary center, help tell the stories of their community members and event participants. We bet your city's organizations are too, everything from libraries to art museums to parks and recreation. Make the ask to have Write Denver "pop-up" at their established events!

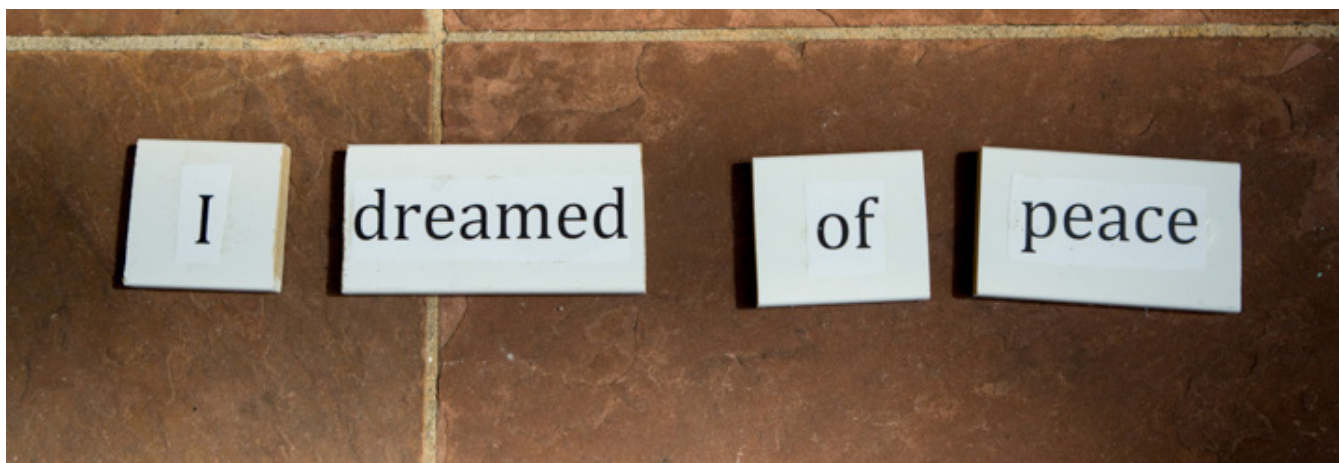
We resolved the pain points by reducing the number of events we ran per month. When it came to keeping up with Step 3, we learned to think of an event as not being over until the submissions were read, selected, and curated, instead of piling up. A little done every day goes a long way!

Here is a breakdown of easy lifts and pain points for Write Denver weekly workshops:

EASY LIFTS	PAIN POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anticipated expenses. Again, grants set the parameter for expenses and revenue as well as making the Write Denver team follow a timeline.• Hiring facilitators.• Fundraising for materials. Pens and notebooks are cheap for an individual to buy, however, when hundreds of pens and journals are needed that particular expense adds up fast. Putting the call-out to the Lighthouse community to donate money during Colorado Gives Day, an annual fundraising event for nonprofits in the state, has made acquiring these materials more easy than not. We've found that people are more generous in their giving when supporting a community outreach project like Write Denver.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The occasional workshop participant. Some of the participants in Write Denver workshops, especially in our Hard Times Writing Workshop, are currently dealing with highly traumatic circumstances (homelessness), and sometimes will have trauma responses in class (known as "being triggered"). When this happens a workshop can become derailed.• Murals. Write Denver has only had near-misses, never a hit, when it comes to finding wall space to "publish" a mural. Unfortunately, it remains a pain point.

These were easy lifts because the Lighthouse faculty and member base has been steadily growing since 1997. Putting the call out for facilitators, volunteer editors, and donors is an expedient part of the process.

We resolved the "workshop participant" pain point by creating a document called "Hard Times Expectations." [See sample on pg. 36.] In both type of Write Denver programs—events and workshops—pain points are more helpful in that they force us to make the project better. Easy lifts are nice for staff and facilitators. Ease makes any job seem less stressful; however, addressing pain points has only strengthened Write Denver.



Word on the Street event at The Galleria in the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. **Photo by Dave Townsend.**

PROJECT STEPS

SAMPLE TIMELINE (“VOICES FROM THE EDGE”)

Here is a timeline example that Write Denver co-created for its collaborative event with the local nonprofit Stories on Stage called “Voices from the Edge.” [See image on pg. 24.]

Voices from the Edge was a boundary-breaking evening of storytelling. Professional actors from Stories on Stage, whose mission is to inspire empathy through live theatre, performed works created through Write Denver’s weekly outreach workshops by community members experiencing homelessness, transitioning out of incarceration, or otherwise facing challenging times. A reception followed the performance, all outreach participants were paid \$75, and the program was supported by Denver Arts & Venues Cultural Partner Program at the McNichols Civic Center Building.

This seven-month-long timeline involved our weekly workshops (for three months) and culminated in the free public event Voices from

the Edge. In other words, Step 1 — “host free community workshops” — and Step 2 — “participants submit work” — took place in the weekly workshops at multiple locations around the Denver metro area (Denver Public Library Central Branch, Jefferson County Public Library Arvada Branch, The Gathering Place, and Colorado Women’s Correctional Facility) and Step 3 — “publication” — took the form of a live theatre performance.

Collaboration Activities and Timeline:

- **October 2017** - Preliminary discussion about collaboration
- **January 2018** - Announcement of writing contest to all participating workshops
- **Jan-Mar 2018** - Working with writers to craft and hone their stories
- **January 2018** - Work with public relations firm to help spread word about event
- **February 2018** - Contact media for potential interviews (CPR, KGNU, Westword + others)
- **February 2018** - Create and print flier for distribution

- **February 2018** - Joint postings on Facebook and Twitter and e-blasts
- **March 2018** - Selection of submissions to be performed at the show
- **March 2018** - Decision on actors to perform at the show
- **March 2018** - Rehearsal with actors
- **April 2018** - Performance to take place at the McNichols Civic Center Building
- **April 2018** - All stories submitted placed on the writedenver.org website

Within this broad timeline occurred other steps and milestones that needed to be hit, sometimes simultaneously. Here are some examples of those steps broken out:

October 2017

- Stories on Stage/Lighthouse: Co-write grant
- LH: Book venue
- LH: Staff members assigned to collaboration

November 2017

- SOS/LH: Submit grant
- LH: Book photographer and videographer for April 2018 performance
- SOS: Book actors for performance

December 2017

- SOS/LH: Received news the collaboration awarded \$5,200 grant

January 2018

- LH: Coordinate timeline with all Write Denver facilitators

February 2018

- SOS/LH: Week of 2/12, begin joint social media campaign
- SOS/LH: Week of 2/19, joint website launch of performance

March 2018

- LH: Week of 3/5, send event call-out to Lighthouse volunteers
- LH: Week of 3/15, program confirmed and sent to designer
- LH: Week of 3/15, venue walk through (tech confirmation, stage, seating, parking, etc.)

Week of event

- LH: Confirm volunteers and send them event duties
- SOS: Rehearsal with actors
- LH: Collect RSVPs from contributing authors and have their checks ready to hand out at the show

Day of event

- LH: Bring all materials to venue an hour before the performance (schwag, linens, food and drink, programs, sign-in sheet, pens, clipboards, name tags, etc.)
- SOS: Tech check (AV)
- LH: Assign volunteer duties
- LH: Set up check in table, food/drink station
- SOS: Pay contributors
- SOS/LH: Start show
- SOS/LH: End show and venue clean up

Week after event

- LH: Pay photographer, videographer
- LH: Post photographs from performance on writedenver.org and contributors' work
- SOS: Send check to LH per grant requirements

Notes on this timeline

Rarely do we (me, you, a partner) work on one project at a time. This includes supporting staff from your own organization and a partner's. In the case of Voices from the Edge, the Lighthouse community programs coordinator,

development director, and executive director, and from Stories on Stage, the artistic director and executive director, were all working with the same timeline from above. That's five calendars that needed to be synchronized from the get-go for only one event. When the timeline activated, however, it set in motion other people's calendars as well: Communication coordinators from both organizations, the venue team, volunteers, operations managers, a photographer and videographer, not to mention the calendars of all the workshop participants and facilitators, actors, and event attendees—all in all, close to 200 people. That's 200 calendars (timelines) that needed to be respected to make Voices from the Edge—pre-event, event, and post-event—work.

Be kind to everyone, yourself included, when it comes to time management by overestimating how long it will take to complete tasks, creating a time scale that makes the most sense for the event and/or workshops (weeks vs. months), owning up if you miss a deadline and giving kindly reminders if a team member misses one, avoiding bottleneck time crunches by assigning simultaneous work to multiple staffers when possible, and visualizing beforehand all the calendars you're activating when presenting an event to the public and doing your best to respect them.

Time is your greatest resource. It takes experience to know how to use it wisely, but once you gain that experience you can begin to create higher quality literary experiences for the neighborhoods of your city or town.



Write Denver parking sign on Colfax Avenue. **Photo by Dan Manzanares.**

ACTIVITY INFORMATION

WEEKLY WORKSHOP: HARD TIMES WRITERS WORKSHOP

To recap, the Hard Times Writers Workshop is a collaboration between Write Denver (Lighthouse), Denver Public Library (Central Branch), and two local publications: Denver VOICE and Birdy Magazine. The official description of the program states: “Poverty, addiction, homelessness, and other hard situations shape who we are and the stories we tell. Learn to put those experiences into words. Sharing is optional, and a seasoned instructor will guide you through prompts and edits to hone your craft. No experience required; writing materials provided.”

Hard Times is held every Tuesday, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., at the Central Branch Library in downtown Denver. In April 2018, the program celebrated its two-year anniversary.

Due to the success of Hard Times, Write Denver has duplicated its format for other weekly workshops, including: Hard Times

Writing Workshop at the Arvada Public Library, Writing to Be Free (serving women transitioning out of prison), The Write Age (for seniors), The Gathering Place Writers’ Group (for women and transgender individuals at a day shelter), cancer ward patients and their caregivers, veterans, and others.

Here’s the “day-of agenda” for a Hard Times session:

- **2:30 p.m.(a):** DPL librarian sets up the classroom. The librarian arrives with a cart that contains journals, pens, a coffee pot with fixings, bottled water, snacks (such as chips and granola bars), other materials (including the library’s calendar of events, handouts with Lighthouse events and classes and community events, and copies of Denver VOICE and Birdy Magazine), and copies of Lighthouse’s tuition assistance form.
- **2:30 (b):** Write Denver facilitator arrives. Note: We don’t allow participants to come into the classroom until the facilitator is ready for them, usually around 2:50-2:55

p.m. This boundary is key for the facilitator to mentally and physically prepare for the session.

- **2:45:** Library PA system announces Hard Times—what, where, and who it's for.
- **2:55:** Classroom doors open.
- **3:00:** Librarian welcomes group, makes any library announcements, introduces Write Denver facilitator.
- **3:05:** Facilitator welcomes group, says a little about Lighthouse, and outlines the class agenda (intros, writing prompt, writing time, editor help, sharing).
- **3:10:** Facilitator asks for brief intros from the group—usually their name, whether they are a Hard Times vet or newbie, and the type of writer they would consider themselves, such as a poet, novelist, memoirist, journal writer, or none of the above. Sometimes a participant will say, “Giuliana. Human.” Also totally fine.
- **3:20:** Facilitator gives writing prompt and asks group if clarification is needed. A writing prompt can vary, and can be almost anything, but mostly it takes the form of a reading—a handout of a poem or a prose piece (fiction or nonfiction) that the group reads aloud and is asked to discuss and then respond to. But a prompt can also be some type of physical prop like Tarot cards, visual art by one of the participants, paint swatches from a hardware store, found objects, a song, etc.
- **3:30 (a):** 30 minutes of writing time in response to prompt, or on anything a participant wants to write about.
- **3:30 (b):** Facilitator asks if anyone wants to meet with one of the editors. Write Denver provides one or two volunteer editors per Hard Times session to help participants polish their work in order to submit to the monthly Hard Times column in the Denver VOICE street newspaper—if a participant

is published in the column (they run three per month), Lighthouse pays the writer \$50. They can also submit to Birdy Magazine where contributors are paid \$25 by Birdy. Usually, one to three writers raise their hands to work with an editor; the editor (if there is only one) divides up the time accordingly, so three people would equal 10 minutes of editing time each.

- **3:55:** Facilitator gives a five-minute warning, saying to finish up those last thoughts and/or use the restroom, grab another cup of coffee, etc.
- **4:00:** Facilitator makes any Lighthouse announcements.
- **4:05:** Sharing begins. The facilitator lays out the rules of engagement when giving another participant feedback, which is to only provide positive feedback/encouragement of what is working. Only when a writer asks for criticism will the group be allowed to give it, otherwise everyone who shares is applauded when they finish reading what they wrote and given only positive feedback.
- **5:00:** Facilitator thanks group for coming and ends session.

Notes on the weekly workshops

Not all, but many of the Hard Times participants have been traumatized by homelessness (current or past), are dealing with chronic physical illness, or suffer from a mental disability. Write Denver's priority is to hire a facilitator who knows how to keep the classroom safe and creative, and to make sure every voice is heard while not allowing those same voices to derail a session. Please refer to the Sample Program Welcome/ Expectations Letter on pg.36 from the Appendix of the toolkit for the procedures a facilitator has at their disposal if a participant is continually disruptive.

Write Denver's current set of facilitators have

backgrounds in social work, poetry therapy, and community education. If a potential instructor does not come from any of these backgrounds, then a training session is set up for them, and they are asked to shadow the regular Hard Times facilitator a number of times before given their own weekly workshop at a different venue. The facilitator's background will determine the prep you need to give them. Regardless of background, we ask new facilitators to attend two Hard Times sessions at DPL in order to see how the agenda works and to ask the regular facilitator or Lighthouse's community programs coordinator any questions.

This work, regardless of background, can be emotionally taxing, especially when the weekly workshops have no end date. Check in with your facilitators a couple of times a month at minimum to make sure they show resilience to the work. In Write Denver's case, this is the job of the community programs coordinator.

It's normal if a facilitator needs a break. Be prepared to bring in a sub for them to run a session as needed. This is good thing in that the organization (Write Denver/Lighthouse) gets another point of contact with the group (Hard Times) while giving the regular facilitator a break.

In two years, we haven't needed to cancel a weekly workshop (knock wood) due to facilitators getting burnt out. However, one time we did come close. The facilitator had worked every week for months and the stress of coming up with new lessons was proving to be too much. We came up with the solution of bringing in another instructor once a month to break up the weekly commitment as well as adding another volunteer editor to help out participants who needed more one-on-one attention. There haven't been any issues since making those changes.

You'll know the weekly workshop is going well



Poetry event at Cherry Creek Arts Festival. **Photo by Brigid McAuliffe.**

because the partnership—in this case, Write Denver and the Denver Public Library—is equitable, the facilitator is energized, and participant retention is high. The latter especially shows program success.

All programs need time to retain and grow a foundation; however, if a month has gone by and the program has very little attendance to show, try tweaking the day and time of the workshop, then the facilitator, and then the partnership.

Another point of success for Hard Times is that the target population is built-in. One goal of Hard Times is to give the homeless population who already use the library's resources a creative outlet. That PA announcement that goes out 15 minutes before a session is heard by hundreds—yes, hundreds—of homeless individuals spread throughout the library. Out of those, a few will stop by; and out of those a few will attend each week and create a foundation for a literary community. Partner with organizations who are already serving your target population and ask those people if they want to write. In our experience, a lot do!

Once word gets around about the success of the Hard Times model, you'll more than likely be contacted by other organizations who serve similar populations wanting to partner. The issue then becomes resources: How far does your grant go in making sure staff, facilitators, and contributors are being paid?

Bonus note

Be prepared for media coverage and interviews once your weekly workshops stabilize. If this means doing mock interviews with staff, do it. The better you get at giving precise and inspirational interviews to the media, the more of a chance you give yourself to share links to

fundors, donors, and participants. A strong, shareable interview is a huge opportunity to expand your audience.

EVENT: CHERRY CREEK ARTS FESTIVAL

Most of the “day-of event” checklist can be found in the “Sample Timeline” section of the toolkit. Please refer to it as needed.

Here is another example of a Write Denver event. Steps 1-3 are taken from our annual collaboration with the Cherry Creek Arts Festival:

- **Step 1:** Pop-up Write Denver's Word on the Street activity during the Cherry Creek Arts Festival [see images on pg.10]
- **Step 2:** Photograph word tile “submissions” [See images on pg.14]
- **Step 3:** Select submissions and “publish” as parking signs [See image on pg.17]

Notes on event

The Cherry Creek Arts Festival has a built-in audience of tens of thousands of people who attend their three-day-long event. When Write Denver did its Word on the Street pop-up, over 700 people interacted with the activity in less than two hours. Find built-in audiences as much as possible and inspire them with highly accessible literary prompts. People who don't identify themselves as writers will interact with your activity and become part of your Write Denver project.

It can be difficult to track individuals who submit work during these pop-up events due to staffing and volunteer constraints as well as the nature of the event itself. Do your best to track the headcount and match up the submissions to the authors, but otherwise, publish

the submissions as anonymous. If you can, collect the contributors contact info (name and email) and if you decide to turn their work into a parking sign, contact them to (a) get their permission, (b) send them a check when the parking sign is installed, and (c) tell them where the parking sign is and encourage them to spread the word about their Write Denver experience.

On only one occasion has the city asked us to take down a sign: When one was installed in front of a civic building. Otherwise, we have over 40 signs installed on both sides of Colfax Avenue, one of Denver's busiest streets. This "guerilla-style" installation technique has worked wonders, getting Write Denver a lot of media coverage and daily exposure from pedestrians.



Write Denver wheatpaste on Colfax Avenue. **Photo by Dan Manzanares.**

EVALUATION

Write Denver receives most of its feedback from participants via periodic surveys. We survey attendees because it gets us the metrics we need to tweak the weekly workshops. A long-term program can't help but evolve. Write Denver facilitators and staff must then evolve with it. We use surveys to help keep our fingers on the pulse of not only participant needs but partner needs, too.

Sometimes a grant report requires testimonials from workshop participants. When this happens, the community programs coordinator will solicit for testimonials via email to one to three regular event or workshop participants. In our experience, "regulars" are more than willing to help out with a paragraph-long testimonial. On occasion, the development director will ask the workshop facilitators to collect testimonials from a few key participants during a session. Also, anyone at any time can fill out the feedback form for both workshops and events at writedenver.org.

Write Denver staff communicates its perception of success with the partner organization's perception of success to see how well the two sync. Usually, both parties can tell when things are going well and when they aren't, but it's still good to check in even when the work seems to be going swimmingly.

During events where we've hired a videographer, we ask him or her to interview event participants to get real-time feedback. These interviews sometimes make the final cut for mini-movies we've made showcasing the event. We can then share this movie that includes event evaluation with funders and the Write Denver community at large.

Please refer to the "Grant Narrative," a portion of one of our Write Denver grant applications. [See pg. 27.] The narrative's goal is to show a potential funder that Write Denver is a worthwhile program that does good within the community.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps for events or workshops that have a clear end date are incorporated into Step 3 of the Write Denver process outlined in the “Introduction” section: Collected writings are published as literary-visual art displays with the goal of building an audience for those installations. One example of this is when Write Denver held a six-week workshop at the Denver VOICE. The VOICE is a monthly street newspaper that provides economic opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. The workshop generated material for the Write Denver anthology coming out winter of 2018. Once submissions to the anthology are accepted, the participants are paid, and when the anthology is printed they’ll each receive a copy. The anthology’s print run and marketing will then hopefully build an audience for the book’s contributors that include writers from all of the Write Denver workshops. Then, that audience, including participants and partners, will have the opportunity to evaluate the anthology.

A good rule of thumb on how to approach a Write Denver event is by considering it as a single event that occurs in three phases:

pre-event, event, and post-event. Try not to let your post-event checklist haunt you for weeks after the day-of event has ended. A Write Denver event isn’t over until the following has happened:

- Everyone has been paid
- All leftover materials from the event are returned to Lighthouse
- Photographs are uploaded on Write Denver’s website
- Photographs are sent to the partner(s) for their own use
- Photographs are sent to the communication coordinator to be put on social media
- Headcount and volunteer hours are submitted to the development director for grant purposes
- Partner(s) have been thanked
- A verbal or written exchange with partner(s) has taken place regarding whether the collaboration will continue next year, next month, etc.
- 1-3 of the event writings are added to Write Denver’s website
- All submitted writings are processed in accordance with Step 2



Voices from the Edge performance at McNichols Civic Center Building. **Photo by Goshen Carmel.**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Here are some FAQs taken from both Write Denver events and weekly workshops, as well as other aspects of the program.

What is Write Denver?

Write Denver is a community outreach program with the mission to get people in the city writing, and then building an audience for that writing. We hope to elevate the self-worth of storytellers right here in our community, whether they're "hipsters," professionals, retirees, construction workers, unemployed, kids hanging out at the skate park, or people new to the city or country.

Is Write Denver part of Lighthouse Writers Workshop?

Yes! The first Write Denver event took place in 2015. Scheduled as a one-off event, the project has since morphed into Lighthouse's adult outreach program starting in 2016 when Write Denver won the Colorado Art Tank competition.

Who may attend a Write Denver event?

Anyone! Write Denver events are free and open to the public. Anyone who either plans ahead to attend an event or stumbles upon it mid-way through is welcome to participate. You don't need to identify as a writer or reader—just let your imagination take over and contribute a line!

Who may attend a Write Denver weekly workshop?

Weekly workshops are geared more for adults in marginalized communities, such as people experiencing homelessness, veterans, cancer patients and their caregivers, refugees, people transitioning out of prison, seniors (older adults), and people at day shelters. Volunteers with editing experience are needed, however, to help out on a weekly basis. Volunteering is a great way for writers of various backgrounds to experience the transformative power of literature taking place during the workshop sessions.

What type of writer is Write Denver looking for?

All types—from beginners to advanced writers, and everything in between. Write Denver also loves and is looking for people who don't identify as writers. We want to encourage these people to interact with our events and workshops as well and hopefully one day submit a line or two.

How do I submit my writing to Write Denver?

Anyone may submit writing at any time using the Write Denver website, writedenver.org. We prefer submissions to be sourced from our events or workshops, but if the writing has a heavy Denver slant we'd certainly consider it for publication.

What type or genre of writing should I submit?

Write Denver accepts all genres; however, the shorter the piece is the better. Because we want to turn your writing into visual art displays and space is limited for, say, a parking sign, we usually solicit for a short poem or an excerpt (one to two paragraphs) from a prose piece (fiction or nonfiction).

I've submitted writing to Write Denver and have been notified that it will be "published." How long do I have to wait to receive my check?

It depends. Write Denver is now publishing work in more traditional ways; for example, as anthologies. The selection process for an anthology takes much longer than the selection process of our parking signs. It might take us a few months for us to know who will be published in an anthology and to get checks sent out. For an event submission, from the time you submit your work, are accepted, and paid, it will usually take three to four weeks. On occasion, you will receive your check before the art display is publically installed.

Who funds Write Denver/Lighthouse?

Lighthouse is proud to be an SCFD Tier III Organization. Additional funds come from Colorado Creative Industries, National Endowment for the Arts and Art Works, Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, Stranahan Foundation, members, and individuals.

Besides attending events or workshops and submitting writing, are there other ways I can become involved in Write Denver?

Yes! Part of the Write Denver project is to create a readership of the "published" art displays around the city. For example, Write Denver has over 40 parking signs along Colfax Avenue. Take a stroll down the Fax and as you do read the city through a poetic lens!

APPENDIX

APPLICATION FOR THE NEXT STAGE NOW ACTIVATION FUNDING

1. Today's Date: MM/DD/YYYY
2. Business/Organization/Individual Name: Lighthouse Writers Workshop, Inc.
3. Type of Organization (non- or for-profit) or Individual:
501(c)3 non-profit organization EIN: XX-XXXXXXX
4. Contact Name: Grant contact: Laurie Wagner Email: xxxxxxxx@lighthousewriters.org
Event contact: Dan Manzanares Email: xxxxxxxx@lighthousewriters.org
Phone: 303-xxx-xxxx
Address: 1234 Sample Street, Denver, CO 80206
Website: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.org
5. Detailed description of proposed activation:
We've all played with magnetic word sets, composing profound statements and silly poems on the blank canvas of our refrigerators. Lighthouse is super-sizing that idea and taking it to the streets in a dynamic, interactive project, thereby engaging the public in creating and sharing poetry and short prose. As part of our Write Denver literary placemaking project, we will activate the Galleria with a hands-on writing/word-play activity that is accessible to all. To prepare for the project, staff and volunteers will create large word tiles by stenciling individual words from a variety of sources—such as a page of the western novels *On the Road* and *Plainsong*, as well as governmental declarations—perhaps the preamble to the Constitution, or the text of Denver's urban camping ban ordinance—on prefinished 1" x 4" x 12" rectangles of wood. On activation day, we'll draw large "pages" on the walkways of the Galleria with sidewalk chalk. Next to each page will be a bin of word tiles. People can create individually, or in groups. Working writers from Lighthouse will be available to coach and encourage folks, and we'll have the original documents available for viewing, too. We'll capture these poems and short prose passages via video and photography, and at the end of the day we'll celebrate participants' creativity by reciting the works out loud to an audience of passersby and participants. Request: \$5,200
6. Proposed activation date(s) and time(s):
August 27, 2:00-5:00 PM and September 3, 2:00-5:00 PM

Our dates and times are flexible.

7. Preferred activation area in the Denver Performing Arts Complex: The Galleria
8. Expected attendance:
120-160 creative participants: 60-80 participants creating poetry or stories each day 600+
Observers/Readers/Listeners/Cheerleaders
Total attendance 750+

9. Detailed event budget:

Revenue	
Portion of Art Tank Grant for Write Denver	\$3,000
In-Kind Volunteer time to help with production of word tiles	\$920
This Grant Request	\$5,200
Total Income	\$9,120

Expense

Materials & Labor for giant word tiles (white PVC molding, paint, stencils)	\$4,500
Storage Bins by Word Source, Sidewalk Chalk	\$100
In-Kind Volunteer time to help with production of word tiles	\$920
Marketing: Social Media Ads and Communications Management	\$1,000
Event Instructors/Leaders	\$1,200
Writing Prompt Cards or Booklets: Design & Print	\$450
Photographer to Document Created Stories/Poems	\$500
Project Planning & Management	\$450
Total Expense	\$9,120

10. Marketing plan overview:
We will promote the event through social media posts to our more than 7,500 followers on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram as well as through our weekly e-newsletter, with more than 7,000 subscribers. To reach a broader audience, we'll utilize social media ads and work to secure media coverage and events calendar listings and partner with local organizations, like the Denver Poetry Map, Slam Nuba, Café Cultura, Minor Disturbance, local creative writing programs, and D-Phi (Denver Project for Humanistic Inquiry), to spread the word to their constituents.
11. Support materials:
 1. Westword coverage of an early Write Denver event:
westword.com/event/write-denver-6926572
 2. From the Write Denver website, a community writing event at DCPA:
writedenver.org/wd-theater/
 3. Poetry street reading with megaphone as part of Write Denver event

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

Communications Coordinator
xxxxxx@lighthousewriters.org
303.XXX.XXXX

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Voices from the Edge to Feature Stories by Denver's Homeless

Actors from Stories on Stage will perform the works at free event

DENVER, March 28, 2018—Lighthouse Writers Workshop and Stories on Stage are teaming up to present Voices from the Edge, a boundary-breaking evening of performed stories, written by Denver residents experiencing homelessness, extreme poverty, incarceration, and other challenges.

Actors from Stories on Stage will perform poetry, short stories, memoir excerpts, and more, all created by participants in Lighthouse's community outreach writing workshops. These free workshops—held at the Denver Public Library, the Arvada Library, The Gathering Place, and a women's correctional facility—meet weekly and use creative writing exercises to encourage participants to find their voice.

Voices from the Edge will take place from 7 to 9 p.m., April 6, at McNichols Civic Center. It is free and open to the public, and a reception with some of the writers will follow.

About Lighthouse Writers Workshop: Lighthouse Writers Workshop is the largest literary arts center in the Rocky Mountain West. For more than 20 years, we've provided quality instruction, community events, and artistic support for writers and readers of all levels, ages, and backgrounds.

About Stories on Stage: Stories on Stage engages audiences with dynamic and entertaining performances of short works of literature. Through the shared experience of live theater, we strive to inspire empathy and to break down boundaries between cultures and generations.

SAMPLE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Memorandum of Understanding between Lighthouse Writers Workshop and Picture Me Here

This memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is hereby made and entered into by and between Lighthouse Writers Workshop (LWW) and Picture Me Here (PMH).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this MOA is to confirm an agreement for classes for refugees taught at Emily Griffith Technology College by LWW and PMH for the June 2017 session, which runs Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00 to 3:00 PM, starting on June 5 and ending on July 19.

DETAILS

- a. PMH agrees to do the following:
 - a. participate in planning workshops
 - b. co-facilitate each outreach workshop
 - c. assist with scheduling workshops as needed/desired
 - d. pay PMH facilitator: \$_____
 - e. always mention Lighthouse as a partner in the program, in materials and press
- b. LWW agrees to do the following:
 - a. participate in planning workshops
 - b. co-facilitate each outreach workshop
 - c. assist with scheduling workshops as needed/desired
 - d. pay LWW facilitator: \$_____
 - e. provide volunteer(s) to assist facilitators as deemed necessary
 - f. always mention Picture Me Here as a partner in the program, in materials and press

Writing and photography from this session may be used by either party for promotional purposes or with other programs, including Write Denver.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

In the event of a dispute between LWW and PMH, the Companies agree to work together in good faith to resolve by negotiation and agreement any claim or dispute that may arise.

PRINCIPAL CONTACTS

The principal contacts for this agreement are:

Picture Me Here
Dave Thatcher

Lighthouse Writers Workshop
Michael Henry

Signed: _____
Date: _____

Signed: _____
Date: _____

SAMPLE LETTER OF INTENT

Letter of Intent

Mission/Purpose (750 characters)

The mission of Lighthouse Writers Workshop is to provide the highest caliber of artistic education, support, and community for writers and readers in the Rocky Mountain Region and beyond. We strive to ensure that literature maintains its proper prominence in the culture, and that individuals achieve their fullest potential as artists and human beings.

Amount of Request: \$35,000

Estimated total project budget: \$230,300

Program/Project Title: Community Outreach, serving disadvantaged and homeless adults and youth

How will funds be used (*staff salaries/benefits, supplies, equipment, etc*) (750 characters)

This request is for program support of \$35,000 per year for two years. Funds will be used toward creative writing instructor fees, instructor training, supplies such as journals and pens, program management and evaluation, and participant anthology design and printing. Funds will also be used to cover a portion of the stipend paid to low-income or homeless individuals whose work is published in local commercial periodicals, specifically the Denver VOICE, a monthly street newspaper that provides economic opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and poverty.

Program/Project Description (*program and its purpose, including why it is needed*) (2,000 characters)

Stories teach us how to be compassionate human beings. They allow us to vicariously experience what it's like to be another person, a person other than ourselves—or, a person just like us. Shared stories let us say, 'yes, that's exactly what it's like,' or 'now I see what you've experienced, now I can at least try to understand what it was like.'

Homelessness, extreme poverty, debilitating mental or physical illness, sexual orientation, addiction, recent incarceration, and aging, subject individuals to discrimination that strips away dignity, promise, and opportunity. Lighthouse believes that writing and reading create a deep understanding of ourselves and others, thereby encouraging compassion and empathy. Lighthouse offers an ambitious program of workshops designed to help disenfranchised and disadvantaged adults and teens explore their innate creativity through creative writing. Our goal is to nurture a sense of self and give participants opportunities for joyful creation—often an antidote to their daily lives—bringing them delight, pleasure, and a sense of camaraderie with others. Through creative writing and

self-expression, they find a voice that can help alleviate some of the stresses of their life. Led by individuals who are active writers and experienced teachers, these workshops build community and connect participants with the larger public.

Our instructors and staff also see great potential in the work created. We work to build audiences for these poems, essays, and stories through readings, traditional publication, and public art displays. This helps destigmatize cultural issues and contributes to a sense in the larger public that these writers are essentially ‘just like us,’ and therefore deserve respect and dignity, not derogatory labels and stereotypes.

Anticipated Results *(how many individuals and the specific ways they will benefit) (800 characters)*

We’ve seen time and again how the creative writing process has created emotional and psychological benefits in those who participate. Recent research has shown that creative writing can provide lasting emotional and intellectual benefits. Often, by writing down difficult life experiences, the author gains a certain amount of control over it, and thus it ceases to have power over them. By shaping it into a story, the writer, whether a young person or an adult, masters the experience. They develop a greater sense of self-awareness and build self-confidence. The power of this process is profound, and can change lives.

These workshops will serve approximately 400 adults and at least 130 youth per year. Most people will attend between eight and 30 sessions, a total of over 4,300 experiences.

Program/Project Activities *(list what will be done to accomplish the anticipated results) (2,000 characters)*

Published authors, trained to work with non-traditional students, lead the workshops. Participants read exemplary published works and study the craft. They write, and then share their work with the group. Instructors and volunteer editors provide feedback and advice. We host public readings and publish work in local periodicals. Some of the work will appear in an anthology distributed to the writers and to members of the community.

Workshop locations, frequency, and who is served:

- Denver Public Library, adults experiencing homelessness or extreme poverty, weekly
- The Gathering Place, day shelter for women experiencing homelessness, weekly
- Halfway house for recently incarcerated women, twice monthly
- Arvada Public Library, adults experiencing homelessness or extreme poverty, weekly
- Lighthouse, veterans in treatment for PTSD, weekly in 6-week sessions
- Fort Lyon, two month-long writers in residence offering daily workshops, homeless men, mostly veterans, in addiction recovery
- The Beloved Community Village, adults who have been homeless, a tiny house village with shared community spaces, 6-week sessions

- The Denver VOICE, adults experiencing homelessness who work as entrepreneurs by vending the paper and as columnists, 8 times per year
- Emily Griffith Technical College, new Americans and refugees learning English as a second language, weekly in 12-week sessions
- Denver Recreation Centers, seniors, weekly in 8-week sessions
- Lighthouse, cancer patients, weekly in 6-week sessions
- McClain Community School, alternative school for teens who've dropped out, weekly
- North Arvada Middle School, a US Dept of Education designated low-income school, weekly
- Pennington Elementary, a US Dept of Education designated low-income school, weekly
- Urban Peak, shelter for homeless teens, weekly
- I-Team Schools, alternative schools for teens with special needs including learning, behavioral, or emotional issues, weekly in 4-week sessions

SAMPLE FACILITATOR AGREEMENT

To: Lighthouse Writers Workshop Date: 4/14/2016

Lighthouse Writers Workshop, Inc. ("LWW") hereby agrees to engage XXXXXXXX, as a facilitator for Lighthouse Writers Workshop, Inc. for facilitating weekly workshops at the Denver Public Library. The facilitator agrees to facilitate the courses solely as an independent contractor. The parties to this agreement recognize that this agreement does not create any actual or apparent agency, partnership, franchise, or relationship of employer and employee between the parties. The facilitator is not authorized to enter into or commit LWW to any agreements, and the facilitator shall not represent him- or herself as the agent or legal representative of LWW.

Further, the facilitator shall not be entitled to participate in any of LWW's benefits, including without limitation any health or retirement plans. The facilitator shall not be entitled to any remuneration, benefits, or expenses other than as specifically provided for in this agreement.

LWW shall not be liable for taxes, Worker's Compensation, unemployment insurance, employers' liability, employer's FICA, social security, withholding tax, or other taxes or withholding for or on behalf of the facilitator or any other person consulted or employed by the facilitator in performing services under this agreement. All such costs shall be the facilitator's responsibility.

Course(s): DPL weekly workshops, starting April 26, 2016, from 3:00 to 5:00 PM. This contract ends December 26, 2016 and will be renegotiated at that time. Days off should be mutually agreed upon by both parties.

Pay scale: \$125 per session.

Class size maximum/minimum: Unless otherwise agreed upon, maximum for all weekly workshops will be 20. The minimum is three.

Payment Terms

Lighthouse Writers agrees to pay the facilitator within 30 days after the start date or event date of the workshop; upon facilitator's submission of an invoice to Lighthouse Writers. All Lighthouse facilitators agree to conduct the workshop in accordance with the Lighthouse Writers mission statement. Lighthouse or the instructor may choose to cancel any workshop if it is below the class size minimum. In such event, no payment will be made to the facilitator.

Non-Solicitation

While this agreement is in effect, and for a period of 12 months immediately following the expiration or termination of this agreement, the facilitator will not solicit for any purpose any students of LWW and will not, either directly or indirectly, solicit, induce, recruit, or encourage any of LWW's students to leave LWW, or take away such students, or attempt to solicit, induce, recruit, encourage, or take away students of LWW, either on behalf of the facilitator personally or for any other

person or entity.

LWW recognizes that its students may, from time to time, approach facilitators seeking individual assistance and on-on-one coaching, outside the relationship this agreement covers. Such assistance might include reading, editing, reviewing, proofreading, line editing, or other similar, supportive feedback on the student's writing. Facilitators agree to notify LWW when any such individual coaching or teaching relationship develops or when facilitator enters into any agreement for coaching or teaching. Facilitators agree to follow LWW's one-on-one coaching guidelines during the course of such a relationship with the student. LWW one-on-one coaching guidelines are available from Lighthouse staff.

Agreement Responsibilities

Facilitators shall:

- Maintain their own work hours and workplace for class preparation, student interaction, exercise creation, and research;
- Conduct workshops and classes according to the agreed-upon schedule;
- Coordinate workshopping schedule with their students;
- Coordinate any makeup workshops if needed;
- Conduct any preparatory research, as necessary;
- Design syllabus and all necessary materials;
- Maintain cleanliness of classroom space, discarding trash and wiping down the table(s) if necessary.

Lighthouse shall:

- Market and promote workshops to members and the public;
- Supply meeting space and other materials, as mutually agreed upon;
- If requested, consult with facilitator on workshop structure and curriculum;
- Pay instructor in net 30 day terms, once instructor has submitted an invoice;
- Supply facilitator with student evaluations once workshop is complete;
- Reimburse for photocopies, up to \$20 per workshop, with submitted receipts.

This agreement shall become operative when the original of this contract is properly signed by the facilitator and returned to Lighthouse Writers Workshop, Inc. This agreement shall remain in effect from session to session and year to year so long as facilitator continues to facilitate classes and workshops for LWW.

Facilitator
Name (print):
Signature:

Agreed to by Lighthouse Writers Workshop, Inc.
Michael Henry, Executive Director
Signature:

SAMPLE PROGRAM WELCOME/EXPECTATIONS LETTER

Welcome to the Hard Times Writing Workshop. Lighthouse Writers Workshop and the Denver Public Libraries created this program to serve writers experiencing homelessness and poverty, though people from all walks of life are welcome. Please read through the following expectations. If you are able to comply, please stay and write with us! If you are unable to comply, please find another space to express yourself and your views.

In Hard Times we always:

- Welcome and respect people of all genders, sexual orientations, races, political beliefs, and religious views
- Abide by all library rules and expectations
- Maintain a safe, supportive environment
- Celebrate creative triumphs and failures

In Hard Times, we never:

- Treat participants or staff with disrespect
- Engage in hate speech of any kind
- Interrupt others when they are speaking
- Use aggressive words or actions

Sharing work:

- Participants share work every week in Hard Times. As group members we provide ONLY positive, supportive feedback to the writer unless the writer specifically asks for constructive feedback. Group members are not welcome to offer critical feedback without first being cleared by the writer who is sharing.
- All work that is shared must maintain an environment of safety and respect. If your political or religious views are defamatory or belittling towards another group of people, please do not share them in Hard Times.
- If you are unsure whether or not your work falls within the expectations of this group, please share it with Lighthouse or library staff to get their feedback.
- If Lighthouse or library staff has any reason to believe that your work does not meet these expectations, they will ask that you not share it with the class.

Lighthouse and library staff have full authority to make decisions in class about what is safe, appropriate, and respectful. If you are unable to respect the decisions of teachers and staff during the Hard Times workshop, you will be asked to leave.

We welcome any feedback on how we can better serve the community. However, it is difficult to review these issues during class time. Please respect our writing and sharing time and send all feedback to: Dan Manzanares, Lighthouse Community Programs Coordinator.

SAMPLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Write Denver Adult Outreach Anthology Submission Guidelines

Dear Writer,

Please consider submitting to Write Denver's 2018 adult outreach anthology!

Include the following information with your submission:

- Name
- Email
- Date
- Workshop you attend
- 1-3 poems; or, up to 1,200 words of prose (fiction, non-fiction)

Please send submission to Dan, xxxxxx@lighthousewriters.org with the subject line: "Adult Outreach Anthology."

There is no theme. You may write what you like.

Other important info:

- Deadline: Friday, May 25
- If your writing is selected you will receive a small stipend and your work posted on writedenver.org. You'll also receive a copy of the anthology.

Thank you so much for your continued support of these workshops!

CREATIVE EXCHANGE PROFILE

WRITE DENVER PUBLISHES THE STORIES OF A CITY'S PEOPLE
JULY 8, 2018
IN SPECIAL FEATURES
BY COLLEEN POWERS



Word on the Street event at The Galleria in the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. **Photo by Dave Townsend.**

What if, when you walked through your city, you saw words other than “No Parking” and billboard slogans? What if you could look around your neighborhood and read the words of your fellow citizens?

Words like:

*Pavement defines city.
I grew up without
parking lots and sidewalks
to keep me on the path,
restrict growth of grass and trees.¹*

Or:

Something that surprises me here in Denver is Colfax Avenue. When I was in Uganda, I didn't expect to find a place like Colfax in Denver, where homeless people sleep on the street. In Uganda, even when people are poor, they take care of each other.²

Or:

Keep on writing, even in the dark. Especially in darkness — that's when words mean the most.³

That idea of publicly sharing community members' writing was the seed of Write Denver, a program of nonprofit literary arts center Lighthouse Writers Workshop. Now, through Springboard for the Arts' Toolkit Cohort, Write Denver will be packaged as a toolkit that any organization or artist can use to change the way their community is written.

A NEW IDEA FOR DENVER

Write Denver was born when writer and artist Tessa Cheek, during a fiction fellowship at Lighthouse in 2014 and 2015, was inspired by programs around the world that display writing on sidewalks and murals and other public installations. She worked with Lighthouse's Dan Manzanares, who now serves as the organization's Community Programs Director, to try the concept in Denver, and began hosting free neighborhood-based writing workshops around town.

"We would give people prompts based on the neighborhood we were in, and go on walks together. We would physically walk these spaces and these neighborhoods," Manzanares recalls of those first workshops.

After attendees wrote pieces inspired by their walks and other neighborhood experiences, they were encouraged to submit their writing to a new website set up for the project. The fledgling Write Denver team began publishing creative writing and workshop photos online.

An opportunity to expand the program came in the form of Art Tank, a grantmaking competition based on the TV show *Shark Tank* and hosted by the Denver Foundation's Arts Affinity Group. A Lighthouse team including Manzanares, executive director Michael Henry, and Jovan Mays, a poet and educator who had

become passionate about Write Denver, made their pitch during 2016's Art Tank.

"We swept it," says Manzanares. Lighthouse won the grand prize, the audience choice award, and an additional grant from the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, leaving with \$36,000 to take Write Denver to the next level.



Write Denver wheatpaste on Colfax Avenue. **Photo by Dan Manzanares.**

WRITING THE CITY

With funding came the chance to create visual arts installations, making the writing physical and visible. Write Denver partnered with local artists to fabricate experiential pieces like Poetrees, wooden sculptures that can be installed at festivals and conferences. Participants are invited to add their written reflections to the public display, one leaf at a time.

For Word on the Street, Write Denver creates word tiles — similar to the magnetic poetry you might have on your refrigerator — and brings bins of them to local landmarks where people would be gathering. The team will outline a page in chalk and invite passersby to assemble the words into sentences, poems, and stories.

Another public installation consists of 40 mock

parking signs on Colfax Avenue, a major Denver corridor. On a stretch between the state capitol building and a nearby high school, these signs appear to show parking rules, but on closer inspection display poems and pieces of short stories and memoirs.

“Now people are writing the city, they’re reading the city,” Manzanares says.



Talking Tree installation at Puritan Pie Factory. Photo by Dan Manzanares.

A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS

As Write Denver experimented with creative installations, they were also partnering with local organizations to reach new and specific audiences. The first of these was the Denver Public Library, which invited Write Denver to host writing workshops for Central Library patrons experiencing homelessness and poverty.

Write Denver began working with the Denver Voice, a street publication whose vendor program offers work and income to those experiencing homelessness. Starting in 2016, the Denver Voice publishes a monthly selection of writing from the library workshop series now known as Hard Times. Writers selected are paid \$50 for their work.

Once the word got out about Hard Times,

Write Denver was hit with a wave of requests for similar sessions — with veterans, with refugees, with incarcerated people, with senior citizens, with people undergoing treatment for cancer. One series is held at The Gathering Place, a day shelter for women, transgender individuals, and families experiencing homelessness.

A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS

This extensive slate of workshops has turned Write Denver into Lighthouse’s primary vehicle for adult outreach. For Joanne Kuemmerlin, a Denver writer who has participated in the Write Age workshops for seniors, the range of that outreach is key to the program’s value.

“It would be easy for this type of program to focus on particular economic, educational, age, ethnic groups, etc. Do not give in to that temptation,” she wrote in an email. “The goal is to ‘paint a city’s voices with words’ and to have a lot of voices beginning to be heard ... especially the ones who haven’t been, and are the ones most in need of having this kind of space opened up for them.”

Every workshop includes an invitation to submit to the Write Denver website for online publication, plus the chance to be included in projects like the public art installations.

This past spring, the program shared participants’ writing in a new way that became one of their biggest successes to date: Voices from the Edge. Write Denver partnered with a local organization called Stories on Stage, which presents live performances of literature. Stories on Stage often features classic pieces by famous writers, and has performed stories by Lighthouse teaching artists, who are also accomplished writers.

This time, Write Denver invited submissions from the outreach workshops to be performed. Sixteen writers from places like the Hard Times library series and The Gathering Place shelter had their work chosen, were paid \$75 each, and got to see their work presented by professional actors at the event in April.

“People were coming out of that event saying, ‘That was the best Lighthouse reading I’ve ever seen in my life,’” Manzanares says. “It was a magical evening.”



Word on the Street event at The Galleria in the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. **Photo by Dave Townsend.**

Events like Voices from the Edge have also helped Write Denver participants become part of Lighthouse’s wider audience, alongside writers from the more traditional paid workshops.

“Some of the most powerful readings or events I’ve seen are where the outreach program has big numbers turn up, and the membership base has big numbers turn up, and everybody is treating each other as writers,” Manzanares says. “‘Big L’ Literature is the meeting ground for people gaining empathy for each other despite their background.”

ENGAGING WITH EMPATHY

Write Denver has become Lighthouse’s vehicle not only for outreach, but also for a new level of engagement in civic issues and conversations.

“One of Lighthouse’s big overarching missions is empathy, and we’ve found that storytelling can play a huge role in finding ways where different communities can be bridged,” Manzanares says.

He points to one of the most talked-about issues in Denver in recent years, an urban camping ban that has led to greater exclusion and criminalization of homeless people. A viral video showed a police officer taking away someone’s blankets on a wintry day because they qualified as “shelter” and were not allowed under the ban.

“We think that if that cop, or if the mayor, or if city council can read enough of these stories, that maybe they would start seeing these people as people,” Manzanares says.

As the Write Denver model becomes a toolkit that can be replicated and adapted in other places, Manzanares emphasizes its potential to prompt civic engagement and deepen empathy.

“Once the work gets out and published on the street in whatever way, it sparks conversation, it sparks dialogue,” he says.

¹From “Under My Feet” by Karen Douglass

²“What Surprises Me” by Grace Ushindi

³From “Keep on Writing” by David Wesley Chapman, published in the Denver Voice

CREAT IVE EX CHANGE

SPRINGBOARD FOR THE ARTS

WWW.SPRINGBOARDEXCHANGE.ORG