

NT Writers' Centre

2020-2024 Strategic Plan



Acknowledgement of Country

NT Writers' Centre acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work, meet and live across the Northern Territory. We recognise Australia's First Peoples as the first storytellers and pay our respects to Elders – past, present and emerging.

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	1
An introduction	3
Our purpose	3
Our vision	3
Our values	3
Our goals, strategies and measures of success	4
Our organisation	6
Our people	8
Staff	8
Board	8
Succession	9
Our program	10
Programming approach	10
NT Writers Festival	10
Development Program	11
Member Services	11
Our financial model	12
Financial projections	12
Our partners, stakeholders and competitors	14
Our evaluation framework	15
Our situation (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths)	16
Our Risk Management framework	19

An introduction

NT Writers' Centre supports, develops and showcases vibrant writing and storytelling in the Northern Territory – celebrating the unique contribution of NT stories and storytellers to Australia's cultural identity.

Our cornerstone event – the NT Writers Festival – is the Northern Territory's premier literary showcase. Held alternately in Alice Springs and Darwin, it is a festival like no other: bringing readers, writers and storytellers together in an annual celebration of ideas, words, stories and languages that showcases our unique NT culture and rich First Nations heritage.

We also deliver a year-round development program, events and member services that support and develop writers of all genres at all stages of their careers.

From 2020-2024, we will grow the reach and impact of the NT Writers Festival and our other programs to unearth new talent, provide development and showcase opportunities, and enhance our reputation as a national leader amplifying First Nations and diverse NT voices and stories.

The NT Writers Festival will become recognised as a hub for all readers and writers, for those interested in ideas, culture, stories and language. It will provide a festival experience that is unique and that attracts audiences from near and far, becoming one of the 'must-attend' literary events in Australia.

Our purpose

To bring people together to share story, language and culture and to support and celebrate Northern Territory writers and stories.

Our vision

Writing and storytelling are valued as vital parts of the Northern Territory's arts and cultural landscape. The region's diverse communities are proud of the stories that are shaped by this unique place, and are empowered to share their own.

Our values

First Peoples First: We recognise Australia's First Peoples as the first storytellers and value their stories as a core component of Australia's cultural identity.

Place: We value Northern Territory writing and storytelling and recognise the unique contribution they make to the nation's literary wealth.

Diversity: We value the creativity and illumination that comes with diversity, and encourage writing and storytelling from people and places across Australia (and beyond).

Inclusion: We create opportunities and remove barriers to allow more people to access literary activities.

Relevance: We work to provide the best and most relevant activities and services for our members and sector.

Our goals, strategies and measures of success

1. Vibrant programming: to support and showcase writers and storytellers through a nationally-recognised festival and year-round development program.

- Listen and respond to the needs, ambitions and interests of members, other local writers and literary audiences.
- Include a mix of writers from the NT, interstate and overseas in the NT Writers Festival program.
 - Build on our partnerships with arts organisations throughout regional and remote Northern Territory, to unearth and showcase new talent (with a particular focus on First Nations writers and storytellers).
 - Build on our partnerships with Australian and overseas literary festivals and writers' centres (particularly those from SE Asia) to encourage co-programming, cross-promotion and mutual capacity building.
- Deliver a year-round development program, events and member services that support and develop writers of all genres at all stages of their careers.
 - Build capacity of local writers (including those who can be employed to deliver workshops or to mentor other writers).
 - Identify opportunities and resources to bring in interstate writers to deliver workshops where local expertise isn't available.
 - Develop project activity in collaboration with local partners.
- We will measure this by:
 - Delivering at least 40 workshops for adults per year.
 - Delivering at least 15 sessions for school-aged children per year.
 - Delivering at least 5 projects in collaboration with local partners per year.
 - Employing at least 15 NT writers to deliver workshops or book talks as part of our program.
 - Growing the NT Writers' Festival box office income.
 - Growing local participation in the NT Writers' Festival, including outcomes from collaborative projects and development programs.
 - Growing the number of interstate visitors attending the NT Writers' Festival.

2. Spreading the word: to foster an appreciation of reading, writing and storytelling by increasing the reach of our festival and activities (in person and online).

- Grow our reach and impact (including our membership, participants and audiences).
- Build on our use of online technologies to reach and consult with stakeholders, as well as to provide and promote literary activities (with a particular focus on people in remote and regional areas).
- Build on our partnerships with regional and remote schools, community groups and organisations.
- Develop an effective marketing strategy to grow local, intra-territory and interstate audiences.
 - Build on our relationships with media outlets and promotional partners.
- We will measure this by:
 - Growing the number of financial members (by 25% over the five-year period).

- Growing the number of people accessing our program (by 25% over the five-year period)..
- Growing the number of strategic partnerships with regional schools and other organisations.
- Offering more online services (webinars, podcasts and online feedback).
- Developing at least one national media partnership.

3. Sound and responsible management: to ensure a strong and sustainable organisation.

- Invest in and implement effective income generation strategies (including Northern Territory and Federal funding, project-based grants, philanthropic / fundraising strategy, and earned income).
- Ensure staff are valued and properly remunerated for their contribution to the organisation.
- Ensure sound governance and financial management of the organisation.
- Build on our stakeholder relationships.
- We will measure this by:
 - Meeting governance requirements of our funding partners and the NT Department of Business (including annual financial audit).
 - Decreasing the proportion of income that comes from government funding through increasing income from other sources (including reaching \$45,000 of sponsorship and \$99,000 of annual earned income by 2024).
 - Undertaking an annual assessment of new and continuing stakeholder relationships.
 - Undertaking annual staff performance interviews (including remuneration).

Our organisation

NT Writers' Centre is a not-for-profit membership organisation.

Growing out of the NT Community Writing Program (an initiative of Brown's Mart Community Arts) in 1993, NT Writers' Centre was formally incorporated in 1997.

For more than 20 years, we have delivered a range of initiatives and activities including festivals, workshops, performance events, publications, mentoring programs and the NT Book Awards.

Our key achievements include:

- NT Writers' Centre registered as an incorporated association in 1997.
- 'Landmark', the NT Writers' Centre's first publication, was released in 1998.
- NT Writers' Week presented in association with the Festival of Darwin from 1999-2001.
- NT Writers Festival (then known as Wordstorm) launched in 2002.
- NT Writers' Centre program extended to Alice Springs from 2005.
- Ghantastic Tour saw six writers visit a series of remote towns and communities in 2005.
- NT Writers Festival was held in Katherine for the first time in 2007.
- 'Terra' bilingual anthology in English/Bahasa was published in 2007.
- 'See My World' anthology of young, First Nations writers was published in 2008.
- NT Writers Festival was held in Alice Springs for the first time in 2009.
- First Nations writers' retreat was held in the Barkly in 2009.
- NT Book Awards launched in 2009.
- NT Writers' Centre recognised as a national Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Writing by the Australia Council for the Arts in 2010.
- 'This country, anytime, anywhere' anthology published in collaboration with IAD Press in 2010.
- Indigenous Editing Forum held in collaboration with State Library of Queensland's black&write! initiative in 2012.
- Collaboration with Australian Poetry to deliver the National Poetry Festival as part of Wordstorm in Alice Springs in 2012.
- Desert Writing workshops with Marie Munkara in Tennant Creek were delivered in partnership with Writers SA and UWA Press in 2013.
- Facilitated Larrakia elder Bilawara Lee and Darwin writer Kamarra Bell-Wykes' participation in national First Nations Writing Workshop and Ubud Writers Festival in Indonesia in 2013.
- Four week residency with nationally acclaimed Aboriginal poet Lionel Fogarty and digital artist Amanda King was held at Borroloola School – a remote school in the Roper Gulf – in 2014.
- 'Desert Writing anthology' published by UWA Press in 2016 (result of 2013 project).
- Andrew McMillan Memorial Residency for an emerging writer to spend time in remote NT was launched in 2016.
- New annual magazine 'Imprint' was launched in 2016.
- The 2017 NT Writers Festival (Alice Springs) saw box office income increase by two thirds.
- Supported Melanie Mununggur-Williams' to represent the Northern Territory at the Australian Poetry Slam Championships in 2018, and she became the first First Nations poet to win the title.

Review of performance 2016-present

	2016	2017	2018	2019 (to Nov)
workshops (adults & schools)				
number of workshops (excl. schools)	20	21	28	43
total workshop hours (excl. schools)	108	108.5	149	150
workshop participants (excl. schools)	210	227	238	371
Number of school sessions	37	12	13	18
school participants	750	186	318	320
regional workshop hours	40	10	26	34
Online writing feedback clinics	0	1	0	2
NT writers employed for workshops	13	9	13	14
Location of annual festival	Darwin	Alice Springs	Darwin	Alice Springs
festival attendances	2000	3186	2500	2249
festival box office	\$18,060	\$24,800	\$13,651	\$20,041
Total number authors in festival	54	53	42	45
Percentage First Nations authors in festival	19%	36%	19%	36%
Percentage NT authors in festival	76%	72%	74%	71%
Festival webcast or podcast	No	Live webcast	Podcast	Podcast
Members & partners				
Financial members (average for year)	150	160	170	180
Number of partnerships	8	9	9	10

Notes:

- Regional NT (for this purpose) is considered to be anywhere outside of Darwin or Alice Springs.
- NT schools in regional and remote areas are rarely able to pay for author visits, and funding for writers' fees and other costs must be acquired elsewhere. Project funding for a schools program of \$15,000 and \$5,000 in 2016 and 2018 respectively increased the reach to regional areas.
- In 2016, nearly half of NT Writers' Festival box office sales were generated from a large-capacity evening event with Magda Szubanski. The 2018 festival had better attendance across the entire program, but smaller box office income as a result.
- In 2019, NT Writers' Festival box office sales were impacted by the Federal Election and excessive rain falling on the largest day of the program

Our people

Staff

NT Writers' Centre currently has a core team of 6 staff members (2.4 FTE year round, increasing to 3.8FTE during festival pre-production and production).

- Sally Bothroyd, Executive Director and previously Director of NT Writers Festival (Darwin, 2015 to present). Sally has a BAHons from the University of Melbourne, and a Masters in Filmmaking from the Victorian College of the Arts. She has lived in Darwin for more than 10 years, and has previously worked as a journalist, with part experience in fringe theatre production, film-making and teaching.
- Fiona Dorrell, Program Manager and Director of 2020 NT Writers Festival (Alice Springs, 2015 to present). Fiona has a Bachelor of Visual Arts from Sydney College of the Arts, and previous experience working with literary magazines and literary events, as well as teaching. She's lived in Alice Springs for seven years and has worked as a project officer for Alice Springs small publisher Ptilotus Press, and as a producer for arts event Unbroken Lands.
- Kingsley Gittens, Project Officer (Darwin, 2019 to present), is a former British Army Officer with a degree in Chemical Engineering. He has significant experience in project delivery and the creation/delivery of training programs, especially in remote and culturally diverse communities. He has self-published a novel online, and is currently embarking on a career change towards writing and arts administration.
- Mx. Sly, Development Manager (Darwin, 2019 to present), is a non-binary writer, performance artist, curator, arts event producer, and a newcomer to Australia from Canada. Their play, *Charisma Furs*, was published by Playwrights Canada Press in 2018, in the seminal anthology Q2Q: Queer Canadian Performance Texts. Sly is a regular contributor to Canadian magazines FLARE and Xtra, and has worked for a number of Canadian arts festivals, including the Naked Heart LGBTQ Festival of Words, and Toronto Pride. Sly founded their own art development company, Tender Container, in 2014 (www.tendercontainer.com).
- Hamish McDonald, Bookkeeper (Darwin, 2011 to present). In addition to being the NTWC bookkeeper for the past eight years, Hamish has also been employed for short-term contracts including as Director of the 2012 NT Writers Festival and as an Interim Executive Director in early 2015. He is very experienced in the areas of theatre production, human resources and venue management.
- Danielle Powell (Alice Springs, 2015, 2017 and 2019 festivals). Danielle has directed the NT Writers Festival in Alice Springs three times. She's a theatre maker and a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts (dramaturgy). She's also a writer and a number of her short stories have been published in anthologies.

Board

The organisation is overseen by volunteer Board of Management

- Dr Adelle Sefton-Rowston, President (Darwin). Adelle has a PhD in literary studies and lectures at Charles Darwin University. She has published numerous essays, reviews, poetry and prose. Adelle's forthcoming book is being published with Peter Lang and explores contemporary literature and representations of race relations in Australia.
- Christian Bok, Vice President (Darwin). Christian is an experimental poet, originally from Canada, and a lecturer for Literary Studies at the School of Arts and Humanities at Charles Darwin University.
- Tanya Heaslip, Regional Vice President (Alice Springs). Tanya was raised in Central Australia through the 1960s and 70s, has practised law for many years throughout Australia, and has now returned to

live in Alice. In May 2019, she published her memoir 'Alice to Prague' (Allen & Unwin) and is currently working on her second memoir. She is an AICD Graduate.

- Varunika Ruwanpura, Secretary (Darwin). Varunika has a Master of Philosophy in Journalism. She is a journalist, writer, researcher and arts professional. Her published children's books are: Exotic Animal Carers, This is my brother and Breakfast in the Jungle. She works for Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin.
- Bronwyn Druce, Treasurer (Alice Springs). Bronwyn is the manager of Alice Springs independent bookseller Red Kangaroo Books.
- Shona Ford, Public Officer (Darwin). Shona is a school teacher with a love of creative writing. She's a past winner of an NT Literary Award, and has encouraged many of her students to also enter the Youth category of the Awards. She writes romance fiction, and her debut novel will be published in 2020.
- Maureen Jipyiliya Nampijimpa O'Keefe (Alice Springs). Maureen is a Kaytetye-Warlpiri woman born and raised in Ali-Curung, south-east of Tennant Creek. Her poems and short stories have appeared in print and online. In 2014 she was the recipient of the Magabala Books Australian Indigenous Creators' Scholarship and her first children's book will be published by Magabala in 2020. She has performed at writers festivals across the country.
- Fred van't Sand (Darwin). Fred is a long-time Darwin resident and performance poet, who's been at the forefront of poetry events in Darwin, including Palm City Poets, the Darwin Poetry Cup and WildWords. He works as a school librarian.
- Dina Davis (Darwin). Dina holds an MA in English and Linguistics. Dina has twice been shortlisted in the NT Literary Awards. In 2018 she published her debut work of fiction, 'Capriccio: A Novel', which was launched in Darwin. Dina's interests include literature, history, and all aspects of human rights.

We also work with our volunteer NT Writers Festival Advisory Committee, which supports the development of our annual festival program.

Succession

Our ongoing succession and risk management processes aim to mitigate the potential disruption caused by unexpected staff and Board changes, including:

- annual update of a procedures manual;
- maintenance of clear records;
- sharing of office knowledge through regular meetings;
- engagement of casual employees, contracted writers and volunteers who may go on to occupy permanent staff positions;
- and maintenance of strong community networks so that potential Board members are groomed to occupy vacant positions.

We recognise, however, that best way to avoid excessive staff and Board change is to make their engagement with the organisation as attractive and rewarding as possible.

All of our office spaces and venues are accessible. Staff positions and salaries are reviewed annually. We offer flexible employment terms for staff to determine the hours and days they work, and have the option work from home if required. We enforce a strict time-off-in-lieu policy to ensure team wellness, particularly around busy festival periods. Professional development and networking opportunities available for both staff and Board, and board meetings are kept brief and purposeful.

Our program

Programming approach

Our artistic approach to each of our three program areas is firmly embedded within our values:

- **First Peoples First:** The Northern Territory is one of the few areas in Australia where First Nations culture, stories, art and language have survived settlement, are flourishing, and – in some cases – are offering artists a viable career path. We use best-practice community-engagement frameworks to work in partnership with First Nations-led organisations and to form and maintain long-term, trusted partnerships with First Nations Elders, writers, storytellers and communities.

“When we tell these stories, they won’t be lost anymore... I want our stories to survive” – Maureen Nampijinpa O’Keefe.

- **Place:** Our artistic rationale embraces the Northern Territory’s uniqueness, because it is this uniqueness that is behind our artistic and cultural vibrancy. The Northern Territory has a wealth of fascinating stories and extremely talented writers generating a strong literary culture. While we aim to help everyone find their unique creative voice and to appreciate the creativity of others, our work has a specific focus on promoting the unique aspects of Northern Territory culture to ensure its survival in the face of globalisation.

“The perfect small festival...exactly the right atmosphere to explore big and complex ideas in the company of generous minds. All in a location reminding us that stories are the foundation of every civilisation” – Morris Gleitzman.

- **Diversity:** The Northern Territory’s long history of multiculturalism also remains a key strength of Northern Territory culture. Macassan fishermen visited Arnhem Land long before European settlement and 37% of Territorians speak a language other than English. This presents a wealth of opportunities for cross-cultural storytelling and understanding through working in partnership with our diverse local communities.

“The 2019 NT Writers’ Festival in Alice Springs was unique in its commitment to creating spaces that honour and centre Indigenous voices, creating spaces for important conversations, and building capacity and capability through its excellent choice of facilitators. I loved that so much thought and care was put into curating a program that was diverse and intellectually rigorous. There was a sense of freshness and buoyancy to the festival... I loved that cultural diversity was not tokenistic but embedded at every level of the programming” – Roanna Gonsalves.

- **Inclusion:** We recognise that some individuals and communities may face additional barriers to accessing our programs or services. We work to identify and address physical, financial and other barriers to access, and use online technologies to overcome the tyranny of distance in the Northern Territory.
- **Relevance:** We listen and respond to the needs, ambitions and interests of our members, participants and audiences.

NT Writers Festival

“The NT Writers Festival is unique among other festivals in Australia – it blends seamlessly into the local area, brings together a balance of local and interstate writers, a balance of emerging and established authors, and it is not afraid to address some of the most urgent and confronting issues concerning Australian literature head on” – Michael Mohammed Ahmad.

The NT Writers Festival is recognised as the major festival of words, ideas and stories in the Northern Territory. Alternating between Darwin and Alice Springs, it provides readers and writers across the region

and beyond with shared cultural experiences that showcase and enhance perceptions of the Northern Territory.

With 1,500 kilometres between its two locations, the festival shifts from the tropics to the desert, from coastal to inland, from Larrakia to Arrernte country, creating a character which reflects the diversity – environmental, cultural and social – of the Northern Territory itself.

Set mainly in outdoor locations, the festival goes beyond the traditional writers festival model, creating a space in which ‘place is presenced’ and that embeds our values into everything we do.

The 2020 NT Writers Festival will be held in Darwin followed by Alice Springs in 2021 – alternating between the two locations each year.

With a strong national reputation and growing audiences, the festival program will include local writers and those from afar – exposing the local community to new voices and ideas and immersing visitors in a rich NT experience. Through our partnerships with community-led organisations, it will also unearth new talent and feature emerging NT writers and storytellers alongside established writers to bring new readers and audiences to their work.

The NT Writers Festival has also developed a reputation as a national leader in amplifying Australian First Nations voices, as well as linguistic and cultural diversity. It provides all local individuals and communities the opportunity to share their stories.

In 2019, the NTWC received funding so it could contract a specialist to formulate a strategic plan especially for the NT Writers Festival. This project was undertaken by Jill Eddington (former director at Australia Council, and former director of Byron Bay Writers’ Festival), and provided the NTWC with a roadmap to take the festival into the future (2020-2023).

“I have never been at a festival where Indigenous writers were so feted and recognised in a genuine and celebratory way. Hooray for the NT Writers Festival!” – Alice Pung.

Development Program

Our year-round development and events program aim to support and develop writers of all genres at all stages of their careers.

The 2020 program will include a mix of activities for aspiring, emerging and established writers in the areas of non-fiction, fiction (long and short form), poetry, spoken word, performance and self-publishing. Each year’s program will be designed in response to the needs, ambitions and interests of members, other local writers and literary audiences.

Our partnerships with arts organisations, businesses, libraries and schools work to increase access to literary activities, develop writing and storytelling skills, and encourage an appreciation of reading, writing and storytelling.

Partnership projects include the Andrew McMillan Memorial Residency (with the McMillan Trust), the Young Territory Authors Awards (with Darwin City Council), and the NT Literary Awards (with Northern Territory Library). We also offer in-kind administration support and advice to small press publisher Ptilotus Press in Alice Springs and have supported various First Nations-led projects like the Ngukurr Story Project, Akeyulerre Healing Centre Poetry Project. We also support National Poetry Slam by running a slam final in Darwin, and paying for one Alice Springs and one Darwin poet to fly to Sydney each year to compete in the National Poetry Slam Championships. Internationally, we have helped feature NT writers as part of the Ubud Writers’ Festival and the Makassar Writers’ Festival in Indonesia.

Member Services

NT Writers’ Centre members receive discounted tickets to the NT Writers Festival and Development Program, the annual Imprint members magazine, and access to manuscript assessments and publishing contract services, publication opportunities, information, advice and promotional support.

Our financial model

Our financial model is built upon a diverse mix of income sources, including: state and federal arts funding, philanthropic grants, sponsorship, and earned income (from event, workshop and membership sales). This includes a number of productive and mutually beneficial agreements with long-term funders and partners, including Arts NT and the Australia Council for the Arts.

In spite of a challenging national funding environment, we are entering this new strategic planning period in a good financial position, with a healthy cash reserve (of approximately \$150,000).

From 2020-2024, our financial plan will focus on investing more in human resources to boost income from sources other than government funding, and increase income from sponsorship as well as earned income.

Earned income is contingent on human resources being allocated for development and marketing (0.4FTE), and increased investment in festival direction and production.

New development strategies and staff resources are already in place to continue to grow and diversify our income. This includes a new Development Manager role and new support from Festivals NT for interstate marketing for the NT Writers Festival over the next two years.

We also plan to invest a portion of our reserves in an effort to reduce our reliance on government funding, and increase income from other sources.

We will continue pay all of our participating writers, including covering the travel costs required for them to take part in the NT Writers Festival or our Development Program (even though these costs are significantly higher than those incurred by our National Writers Centre Network colleagues in other states).

As a small, cost-effective organisation, we do not have any major liabilities, overheads or assets (other than office equipment and a small library).

Our diverse program ensures we draw members, participants and audiences of all levels, artforms and interests.

Financial projections

Expenditure projections anticipate an average annual expenditure of \$440,000 per year, but our business model ensures we have the flexibility to expand or contract our program costs in line with income.

Fluctuations in annual expenditure are due to the festival being held between Darwin and Alice Springs on alternate years, and the biennial NT Book Awards workload.

It is estimated that growth in earnings and sponsorship will plateau by the fourth year without extra resourcing for specialised staff.

	2020 KPI	2021 KPI	2022 KPI	2023 KPI	2024 KPI
Earned Income	\$50,000	\$56,200	\$77,600	\$97,700	\$99,000
Sponsorship / philanthropic	\$38,800	\$40,500	\$45,000	\$58,000	\$60,000
Grants/Subsidies					
Australia Council	\$89,065	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Federal Government Other					
ArtsNT Recurrent	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$140,000	\$140,000
ArtsNT Other (in-kind office rental support)	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Other Grants	\$97,000	\$87,000	\$45,000	\$25,500	\$20,500
Total Grant Income	\$351,065	\$352,000	\$310,000	\$290,500	\$285,500

TOTAL INCOME	\$439,865	\$448,700	\$432,600	\$446,200	\$444,500
<i>percentage income from govt grants</i>	80%	77%	72%	65%	64%
Profit/deficit if expenditure is \$460k	-\$20,135	-\$11,300	-\$27,400	-\$13,800	-\$15,500
Reserves	\$149,265	\$137,965	\$110,565	\$96,765	\$81,265
operating reserves	33.93%	30.75%	25.56%	21.69%	18.28%
Profit/deficit if expenditure is \$440k	-\$135	\$8,700	-\$7,400	\$6,200	\$4,500
Reserves	\$169,265	\$146,665	\$103,165	\$102,965	\$85,765
operating reserves	38.48%	32.69%	23.85%	23.08%	19.29%
Profit/deficit if expenditure is \$420k	\$19,865	\$28,700	\$12,600	\$26,200	\$24,500
Reserves	\$189,265	\$217,965	\$230,565	\$256,765	\$281,265
operating reserves	43.03%	48.58%	53.30%	57.54%	63.28%

Our partners, stakeholders and competitors

Northern Territory partners and stakeholders

NT Writers' Centre members

Literary organisations and events (such as Dirty Word, Red Dirt Poetry Festival and Borderlands literary magazine)

Libraries and bookshops

Writers and writing networks within the NT (including writing groups in Katherine, Palmerston and Tennant Creek)

Funding partners (including Arts NT, Festivals NT and Community Benefit Fund)

Publishers (such as Ptilotus Press, Batchelor Press and IAD Press in NT, and UWA Press and Magabala in WA)

Schools and educational institutions (including Charles Darwin University)

Venues (such as Olive Pink Botanic Garden, George Brown Botanic Garden and Brownsmart)

Arts organisations and cultural festivals (such as Barkly Arts, Katherine Regional Arts, Red Hot Arts, Desert Harmony Festival, Barunga Festival, ANKAAA and Desart)

First Nations communities

First Nations Arts Centres (including Hermannsburg Potters and Tjanpi Desert Weavers)

Hotel and accommodation providers

Tourism providers

Media

Northern Territory competitors

Larger NT cultural festivals and events (which compete for available local and tourist audiences and ticket income)

First Nations-run festivals such as GARMA (which compete for the same artists and audiences)

Our evaluation framework

NT Writers' Centre takes an integrated approach to measuring our success in terms of:

- Artistic and cultural vibrancy
- Engagement and reach
- Relevance, impact and broader social benefit

In addition to meeting all of our internal and contracted deliverables and key performance indicators, our evaluation framework includes:

- Internal review and evaluation (planning, research and development, reflection and analysis).
- Formal and informal documentation and evaluation (consultation and feedback).
- Online and offline engagement (surveys, consultation platforms, consultation and stakeholder meetings).
- External opinion (reviews, critique, media, online engagement, e-news and booking systems).
- Audience participation and attendance (quantitative assessments, qualitative investigation and narratives).
- Partnerships with community-led organisations (community liaison, co-curation, adherence to appropriate protocols, level of engagement and representation, level of self-determination, and feedback).

Our situation (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths)

The Northern Territory has the smallest population in Australia, estimated to be 247,940 at the end of June 2019 (based on an average annual growth rate of 0.88% since 2011).

About three quarters of the NT's population lives in metropolitan areas of Darwin and Alice Springs. Capital city Darwin has an estimated population of just over 120,000 people.

NT has one of the youngest demographics in Australia. The 2016 census shows the median age of people in Northern Territory was 32 years. Children aged 14 years or younger made up 21.6% of the population, while people aged 65 years or more made up 7.2% of the population. The population is made up of 48.2% women and 51.8% men.

According to the census, the top five ancestries of Northern Territory people are: Australian, English, Australian First Nations, Irish and Scottish. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account for 26.8% of the population.

Other than English, the top five languages spoken in the Northern Territory are: Kriol, Djambarrpuyngu, Greek, Warlpiri and Murrinh Patha. More than 100 Australian First Nation languages and dialects are spoken in the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory has a total area of 1,349,129 km², which accounts for around 17.5% of Australia's total land mass. The 'Top End' of the Northern Territory has a coastline that extends more than 13,500 km.

More than 180 events take place in the NT annually. Tourism activity is an expanding sector with significant tourism economy and assets such as the world-famous Kakadu National Park, Uluru, Katherine Gorge and other national parks.

Strengths

- NT Writers' Centre is the only dedicated, funded organisation for writers in the Northern Territory.
- The NT Writers Festival is the only major writers festival in the Northern Territory. It is recognised as an important part of a national network of major writers festivals in each capital city in Australia. Its two sites allow access for communities in both Alice Springs and Darwin, and provide unique opportunities to attract visiting writers and tourists. Its local focus on First Nations and diverse NT voices has national importance.
- Reputation for quality service delivered by a small team of talented and dedicated staff and volunteers. Staffing is stable after a period a significant change at the start of 2015. Many of our past team members continue to contribute to the organisation.
- Strong local, national and international networks and partnerships, including productive relationships with Art NT and the Australia Council for the Arts, supportive local First Nations communities, and our key role within the National Writers' Centre Network.
- New office space in Darwin that is fit-for-purpose for the next stage of our development.
- Good financial position, with a healthy cash reserve.
- New development strategies and staff resources in place to diversify income.
- Festivals NT support for interstate marketing for NT Writers Festival over the next two years.
- Cohort of committed and talented members.
- Unique access to NT's cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Reading is the number one way that Australians engage with the arts. Nearly nine out of ten people regularly read some form of literature (which ranks higher than watching TV or browsing the

internet as the nation's favourite pastime). Participation in reading, writing and storytelling is growing faster than visual arts and music. The number of Australian writers continues to grow.

Weaknesses

- Challenge of servicing a vast geographic region, across a wide range of genres and skill sets.
- Increased cost of delivering services and programs in the Northern Territory, particularly to remote and regional areas.
- Innate complexity of using best-practice frameworks to work within community-engaged contexts, such as forming and maintaining long-term, trusted partnerships with First Nations communities.
- Challenges of delivering a festival in outdoor settings.
- Isolation and distance from the literary sector infrastructure of the east coast.
- Recent federal funding changes have influenced the entire sector, and increased competition for the funds and opportunities that remain. Literature receives the smallest proportion of federal arts funding.
- Limited IT support, in a constantly changing IT landscape.
- Limited staff hours for fundraising, partnerships or business development.
- Difficulties in maintaining a skills-based board or advisory committee due to small and transient NT population, and limited access to governance training opportunities.
- Writers (and the sector that supports them) are amongst the sector's lowest average income earners and funding recipients. Australian authors can aspire to an average of \$12,900/year from creative work (or \$4,900/year for poets). Only 20% of writers are able to write full time. Only 5% of writers earn Australia's average income. Members of marginalised groups are further disadvantaged.

Opportunities

- The economic development of North Australia has become a priority of the NT and federal governments.
- Education is another priority of all levels of government. Our work has a role in boosting literacy rates and other educational outcomes.
- Current and growing demand for more diverse voices and for Australian stories that depict the authentic, lived experiences of people from marginalised and under-represented groups.
- First Nations creators are increasingly being placed at the heart of arts policies across the country, and their work shared and appreciated to a growing audience (with 63% of Australian readers believing in the importance of First Nations books). The new Australia Council Strategic Plan has a focus on diversity.
- Online technologies allow us to explore new avenues to increase participation and overcome the tyranny of distance in the Northern Territory. NBN and other telecommunication improvements may lead to better regional service opportunities.
- Potential to capitalise on the expanding tourism economy.
- Potential for more partnerships with the national and SE Asian literary sector.

Threats

- Financial uncertainty due to a constantly changing funding environment, which have resulted in reduced support for service organisations and literary journals in particular. A gap is emerging for emerging writers, who will have less access to paid publication opportunities and subsidised creative and professional development.
- Low number of interstate and return visitors due to the expense of travelling large distances.
- Poor digital connectivity.
- Delivering a big remit with a small team presents risk in terms of meeting demand and managing staff wellness and burnout.
- Staff and board turnover could lead to loss of corporate knowledge.
- If circumstances were to alter our ability to deliver our programs, it would put the Northern Territory's rich history, stories and culture of story-telling – particularly First Nations stories – at risk of being overwhelmed or lost within the digital sea of imported content. This could also risk continued decline of literacy rates, leading to poorer employment outcomes for Territory students, particularly First Nations students.
- NAPLAN results show that Northern Territory students already have the worst literacy rates in Australia.