

2025

AWA's

7 STEPS TO SUCCESS



Everything You Didn't Know You Needed To Know About Being An AWA Certified Affiliate

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3

Letter From The Chair

4

Before We Dive In...

5-7

Dreaming & Brainstorming

8-10

Community

11-15

Planning

16-18

Marketing & Branding

19-21

Your First Workshop

22-23

Your 50th Workshop & Beyond

24-27

The AWA Organization



For AWA's Amazing Affiliates

We have heard often over the years the affiliates' burning questions – What do I do now? and What can AWA do for me? These are both essential questions. As we have expanded the many things AWA has to offer through our website, our sponsored trainings, our workshops and retreats, we recognize it can still be confusing or feel daunting. Our 7 Steps to Success is a huge step forward to help you no matter where you are in your journey. It provides a process to begin or begin again, it provides a framework to being successful, and most important it provides a map to where all of our essential nuggets of info are located. We are so excited to provide you with this miraculous document. Have fun and enjoy. Most of all – Thanks for being part of our family.

guy howard klopp – AWA Board Chair

YAY!



You're officially an AWA certified facilitator!

Now what?

BEFORE WE DIVE IN...

To pull your first workshop together, all you need is a group of willing participants, a few prompts, and a place to gather.

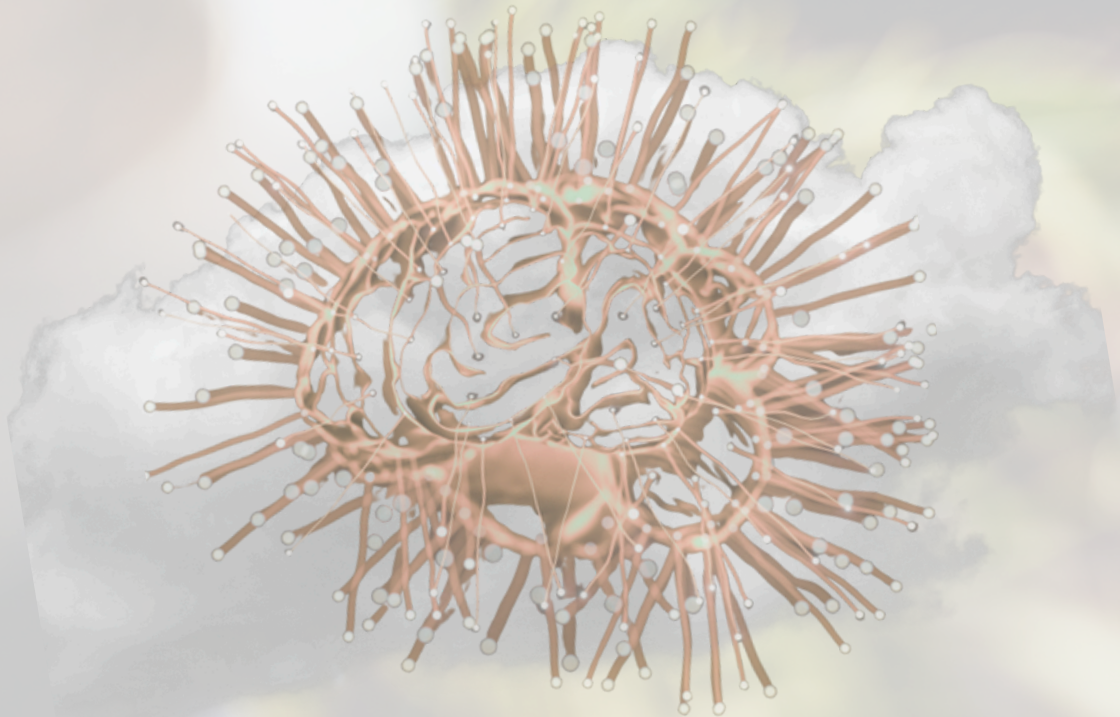
We say this because in this packet you'll find everything we could think of that you might want or need to consider in your facilitation journey. From your first workshop to your fiftieth and beyond—plus some helpful reminders and resources.

There's a lot of information here, so focus on what's useful at present, and leave the rest for later.

This packet is meant to serve as a source of inspiration as you take your next steps. But you don't need it all figured out to begin.

Step One: Dreaming & Brainstorming

Big picture thinking to help you get started.



01

Dreaming & Brainstorming



Questions to ponder when coming up with your ideal workshop:

- 1** What excites you? Where's your passion? What's your purpose? (You know, just your average everyday existential questions!)
- 2** For love? Or money? Or a bit of both?
 - RESOURCE: If you want some help dreaming, Sue Reynolds created [this worksheet](#) to help you envision the future of your workshops and develop actionable goals to get you started in the present. Sue also offers [The Write Strategy](#), a full two-hour workshop to help you plan your dream offering. Click the link to watch a video of that workshop.
- 3** Who do you want to write with? Adults? Teens? Seniors? Under-served folks? Women? Men? BIPOC? Parents? Or just anybody who wants to write with you?
 - RESOURCES: If you're interested in working with a specific population, we can help you feel confident reaching out to agencies. The [Data](#) and [Press](#) sections of the AWA Resource Library can help you build a case to the organization of your choosing. [Chapter Four in the Manual](#), on Diversity and Outreach, has information about getting started and even obtaining funding to work with under-served populations, including a sample proposal letter and information on a concept paper. It also offers case studies about working in prisons and at a center for the blind. Sue Reynolds, mentioned above, also offers a version of The Write Strategy specifically for those wanting to start this kind of group.



Step Two: **Community**

You're not in this alone.

There are many ways to connect with other AWA facilitators for support, resources, guidance, expertise, inspiration, and friendship.

COMMUNITY BUILDING RESOURCES

1

If you want to branch out beyond the facilitators you trained with and get to know others in your area, or those doing similar work, AWA is building a network of Chapters to help you do so. These Chapters are by-affiliates, for-affiliates. The groups that are thriving have a few leaders working together to help plan events.

- Currently, we have these chapters (ones that are active are in bold):
 - **Amherst Writers of Jewish Identity**, contact: [Barbara Krasner](#)
 - **AWA Canada**, contact: [Website](#)
 - **AWA Ireland**, contact: [Website](#)
 - **AWA Northeast** (New England, NY, and NJ), contact: [Andrea Vassallo](#)
 - **AWA Down South**, contact: [Lane Goddard](#)
 - **AWA Capitol Region**, contact: [Facebook page](#)
 - **AWA West** (CA, OR, and WA), contact: [guy Howard Klopp](#)
- Don't see the group you'd like to join above? **Make moves to start a chapter of your own!** The first step is to [host an online or in-person gathering](#) of AWA leaders. You can plan a meet-up based on region, or area of interest. Once you have met and identified some collaborators to help build the community, here's our guide to [beginning a chapter](#).

2

Stay in touch with your AWA training cohort (in the past, some have done this through Facebook groups, email chains, or even meeting periodically over Zoom, whether just to chat or to write together, rotating leadership to give each other practice as facilitators) for support, community, and collaboration.

COMMUNITY BUILDING RESOURCES

3

Use the [AWA affiliate directory](#) to connect with other facilitators.



**Connect with facilitators
by joining conversations
in the AWA Forum.**



4

Attend a Water Cooler- an online gathering of fellow facilitators to share and/or seek advice, support, resources, and inspiration. You can find these [on the AWA Calendar](#) every other month,



Join AWA's yearly [Professional Development Retreat](#) to learn from and connect with your peers.

- AWA is a robust organization run by a merry band of volunteers. There are many ways to get involved in the organization (see part seven for details).

6

Join a Launchpad Group. These groups are designed to help affiliates get their dreams off the ground with the support of a seasoned facilitator.



A spiral-bound notebook with a light orange cover and lined pages is the central focus. A pen with a colorful checkered pattern lies diagonally across the bottom right of the notebook. Surrounding the notebook are several crumpled balls of paper in white, light blue, and yellow. The background is a solid light orange color.

Step Three: Planning

AKA THE NITTY GRITTY

Everything you need to create your ideal workshop.

03

Planning

AKA THE NITTY GRITTY

1

How will you structure your workshop?

- A series (6-week or 10-week for example) or drop-in sessions?
- How many people do you want in a workshop?
- Will you screen participants ahead of time?
- Will you meet online or in person? (If you choose online, AWA has [many resources to help](#): one training from 2020 and [another from 2025](#), as well as [a template for sharing Zoom best practices](#) with participants in advance).
- Will you offer manuscript feedback?
- What about 1:1 consultation?
- **RESOURCES:** [Chapter Five in the Manual](#), Planning and Publicity, offers some guidance in these questions as well as a suggested schedule for a 10-week workshop.

tip

*Set it up so that it works for you. The first person to please is yourself.



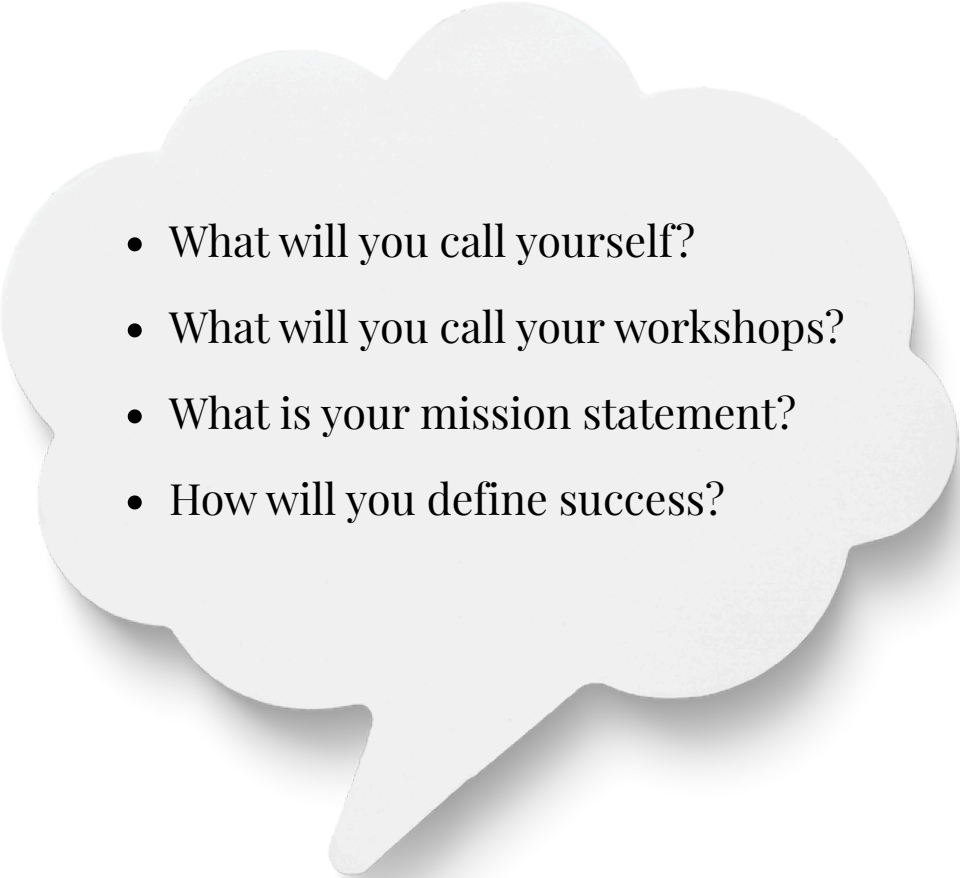
Planning

THE NITTY GRITTY CONT'D.

2

Will you set up an organization, a business, or create a brand for yourself?

We'll go into more detail in the Branding & Marketing section, but for now, here are a few things to consider...

- 
- What will you call yourself?
 - What will you call your workshops?
 - What is your mission statement?
 - How will you define success?



Planning

THE NITTY GRITTY CONT'D.

3

All Things Money:

- How much will you charge? If you're curious what to consider in your decision, we've shared some thoughts [here](#). Pay as you go, or pay upfront? A discussion of this specifically for online groups is archived [on the Forum](#).
- Will you offer scholarships? Sliding scale?
- How will you take payments? Some options are showcased [in this Forum post](#).
- What happens if someone drops out? What is your refund policy? If a participant has already paid, but then wants to withdraw prior to a workshop, will you refund 100% of their fee? 50%? Under what conditions? Similarly, however, what about if you have to cancel a workshop? Will you display website text, or have text in an email, assuring people they will get their money back?
- How will you track your costs? You're welcome to borrow or adapt this [monthly cash flow template](#) shared by Affiliate Elizabeth Sprague. [This checklist for daily, weekly, and monthly task maintenance](#) for your practice, created by Affiliate Lane Goddard, also has some financial tracking resources.
- Will you do your own bookkeeping to then hand to an external accountant? Or will you take care of all financial reporting yourself?

Planning

THE NITTY GRITTY CONT'D.



4

Write Around the World

- [This annual fundraiser](#) is the perfect opportunity to rip off the Band-Aid and get started as a facilitator, even if you're still in the process of pulling your ideas together. You will be supported every step of the way. Or if you've been leading workshops for a while, it's a good opportunity to experiment and try something new.
- We start soliciting volunteers in December to lead groups in February, and offer support and resources throughout January to help with planning. Pencil those dates into your calendar!

***All that's left is choosing a start date.
Then it's time to find your people.**

Step Four:

Marketing & Branding

A photograph of a desk setup with a laptop, monitor, and tablet, all displaying 'JUST START' on a pink background. The desk is white and has a keyboard, mouse, and a pair of headphones. A shelf above the desk holds various items. The background is a plain wall.

Building your brand and finding your people.

Marketing & Branding

04

1 Building your brand

- Will you create a logo? Canva is a great resource for creating your own design elements if you want to save some money. Affiliate Ashley Schein offered a 2024 retreat session on [Canva and Marketing Basics](#) that you can view with the passcode @pe7SBC!.
- What about a tagline?
- Will you create a website? If so, AWA has some resources for that! Slides from a session on website building at our 2023 facilitator retreat, as well as opportunities to discuss [in the Affiliate Forum](#). But if you aren't ready for that, your listing in AWA's directory is a perfect starting place for your virtual home! Instructions for setting it up are in your [Affiliate Benefits Guide](#).
- Will you have a social media presence? AWA offers a class on using Instagram as a workshop leader, if you're interested to learn about that. Just send \$15 [via PayPal](#) with "Instagram Class" in the memo and email a copy of your receipt to danielle@amherstwriters.org. She'll respond with the recording and materials.
- What's your elevator pitch?

You don't *need* any of these things to get started. Many of us started with good ol' fashioned email and then built our brands later.

Marketing & Branding

CONT'D.

2

Getting the word out

- Start with people you know - Affiliate and former Board Chair Sue Reynolds created [this great resource](#) to help you identify marketing channels and make a plan to reach out to them
- Social Media - Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn
- Post flyers
- Think about where writers go - bookstores, coffee shops, libraries
- Community Centers
- Meetup
- Volunteer to give free services at places such as the library to get yourself into the community
- Start an email Newsletter or Substack. Many experts say that regular, or even semi-regular emails sent to a “healthy” email list is still one of your most reliable and effective methods of marketing.



A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a hand holding a pencil, poised to write on a spiral-bound notebook. The background is bright and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light. The overall tone is professional and focused.

Step Five: **Your First Workshop**

Be flexible.

Stay curious.

Look at it all as experimentation.

You're ready. You've got this.

05 Your First Workshop

- 1** Reaching out to your group for the first time – what to say and when:
 - If you want to offer the Philosophies and Practices as an email attachment (you’ll still want to review it during the session, of course) AWA has [this PDF](#) you can borrow or adapt.
 - If you’re meeting online, you may also want to share suggested Zoom etiquette to get everyone on the same page. [Here’s the doc AWA uses](#)—again, you’re welcome to borrow it or use it as inspiration.

- 2** How will you welcome your writers? Ice breakers? Section 9 [in the manual](#) (beginning on page 150), about On Chairs, goes over that practice and how it helps to settle writers into the room.

- 3** Introducing the method to your group – a refresher. You can run through the PDF you shared via email or practice your way of explaining it.

- 4** Prompts:
 - What makes a good prompt?
 - How many prompts will you bring? Which prompts? In what order? Why?
 - It’s a good idea to start a prompt library – collecting poems, quotations, imagery, music/lyrics, sound, photos, art, etc. in a place, physical or digital, that makes them easy to access. You can seed yours with these collections of Emergency Prompts, gathered from the AWA community each year: here are [2018](#), [2019](#), [2020](#), and [2024](#).

Your First Workshop

CONT'D.

5 Managing Time: Sue Reynolds created a helpful tool for estimating how much time a group will need for different portions of the session based on the number of writers. We call it, “[Sue Reynolds’ magic algorithm](#).” Page 96 in the training manual also offers a sample timeline.

6 Managing a group of people the AWA way. Pages 97 - 102 in the training manual are a good place to help remember what was learned in the training.

7 Craft, craft, craft!

- There are many ways to deepen your own understanding of craft: reading and analyzing writing that you love to explore how they work, reading books about the craft of writing or attending classes about it (like AWA’s Post-Certificate Trainings) and of course through attending AWA groups!
- Pages 117 - 120 in the training manual can help you understand how to use prompts that encourage the development of craft.
- Craft development in AWA groups also comes through responses, both in giving and receiving feedback. You may want to review pages 101 - 102 in the training manual for a list of “Elements to Listen For,” to strengthen your own responses, and share a version of it with your groups to help if they want support in responding.

8 Offering manuscript feedback

- If you're ready to do this, you may want to revisit the AWA guidelines for manuscript review in our Post-Certificate Training or in Section Eight of the manual.
- You could also sign up for a Blue Pencil session to experience first-hand how a one-on-one AWA manuscript review goes.

9 How will you close your workshop? A piece of writing or a closing ritual?

10 Requesting testimonials and feedback

- You can receive testimonials and recommendations on your listing on AWA’s website. [Instructions for doing so are in the Affiliate Guide](#).
- You could also create a Google survey, [like we do here](#), to solicit robust feedback. Or, just ask writers to email you directly with a brief testimonial or any constructive criticism.

Step Six:

Your 50th Workshop

Time to shake things up a bit.



...and beyond

06 Your 50th Workshop

...and beyond

- 1 Expanding your offerings - Now that you're a pro, do you want to try something new or different?
- 2 Consider helping your writers get published.
- 3 Cast a wider net - is there a new or different audience you'd like to write with? AWA's [Power of Story](#) program is working on a guide to connecting with the specific population of your choice, modeled after the work that they do.
- 4 Craft! Refining your prompts and guiding responses to make sure they lead to craft improvement when possible. This conversation about [how to encourage robust feedback](#) could help.
- 5 Tune-Ups
 - [Post-Certificate Trainings](#)
 - Trauma-Informed Training
 - Facilitator's Salon—Check the affiliate newsletter for upcoming sessions.
 - [Ellen Bass Living Room Sessions](#) (a great resource for poetry craft)
- 6 Maybe it's time to make some new connections and reach out to some new networks
 - Host an online or in-person gathering of AWA leaders (you can find leaders near you using the [Directory](#), or [reach out to Katie](#) to share your invitation with a wider network)
 - [Start an AWA Chapter](#) or join an existing one
 - Join a Water Cooler Conversation
 - How to reach out to non-profits, writing organizations, specific populations, and others. AWA is working on new materials about this. For now, Section 4 in [in the training manual](#) has a lot of guidance for you.
 - Share your experience at [AWA's Professional Development Retreat](#)

A photograph of a person with short, curly grey hair, wearing a light purple t-shirt and blue jeans, sitting cross-legged on a log in a forest. They are holding a notebook and a pen, appearing to be writing. The forest is lush with green foliage and tall trees. A dark red banner is overlaid on the top left of the image, containing the title text.

Step Seven:

The AWA Organization & How to get Involved

AWA is a robust organization run by a group of passionate volunteers. There are so many opportunities to get involved.

107

The AWA Organization & How to get Involved

- 1** Volunteer Opportunities
 - [Write Around the World](#) - Lead a workshop during AWA's annual fundraiser.
 - [AWA's Professional Development Retreat](#) - Share your expertise with other AWA facilitators during AWA's annual peer led retreat.
 - Lead a monthly online write (the form to apply will be available in October and November for the following year's schedule) or be a breakout room facilitator
 - Join the [Power of Story](#) and lead workshops for specialized populations.
- 2** Consider joining a committee to lend your expertise—*see the following page for the full list!*
- 3** Consider [joining the AWA Board of Directors](#).

Until Next Time!

If you made it this far, we're wildly impressed! We hope you got what you came for and more. But if you still have a burning question, [please reach out](#). We love hearing from fellow workshop leaders.

This document was created by the Marketing & Communications Committee. We are a group of AWA affiliate volunteers who feel passionate about AWA and have an interest in marketing.

Maybe you'd like to join us or one of the other committees that keep AWA running:

- Publishing / AWA Press Publications
- The Power of Story / Social Justice Outreach
- Write Around the World
- Annual Retreat
- WriteOn! November
- MORS (Membership: Outreach, Retention & Support)
- Marketing & Communications
- Scholarships
- Substack





To grow in craft is to increase
the breadth of what I can do,
but art is the depth,
the passion,
the desire,
the courage to be myself
and myself alone.

~ Pat Schneider