

Manitoba Book Awards/
Les Prix du livre du Manitoba
2024 Feasibility Study

Report Appendices

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The Manitoba Book Awards/Les Prix du livre du Manitoba (MBA/PLM) 2024 Feasibility Study was conducted by Kayla Calder at the request of the MBA/PLM coalition. This document is an accompaniment to the 2024 Feasibility Study Report.

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SITUATION ANALYSIS

Prepared by: Kayla Calder, Consultant
Last update: June 10, 2024

Introduction

The Manitoba Book Awards/Les Prix du livre du Manitoba has existed for more than 30 years. The program celebrates excellence in Manitoba writing, editing, publishing, storytelling, book design, and illustration. The portfolio includes 14 awards, many of which are bilingual, as well as an award for French-language books, an award for emerging writers, and an award that recognizes excellence in Indigenous communities.

This program is one of the more visible ways that Manitoban literary talent is recognized and is quite prominent in the community (specifically for authors, publishers, librarians, booksellers, and readers).

Current Situation

- Although the program is being managed by four passionate organizations, the demands are exceeding available resources.
- These challenges reflect a growing trend for both national and regional book awards organizations including the Saskatchewan Book Awards and the ReLit Awards.
- All four members of the coalition have agreed to suspend program activities for the 2023-24 cycle to allow for the creation of a feasibility study; this has been announced publicly.
- The coalition has implemented all the efficiencies they can think of to streamline both direct costs and labour while still generating positive attention for award nominees and recipients.
- Even though it is appreciated and supported across the community, managing the program has become untenable and the coalition has identified that a feasibility study and subsequent restructuring has become urgent.
- From this process, the coalition hopes to have the requisite information and direction to return to the community and work out specific short-term plans and longer-term goals for the program.
- Development of the feasibility study is funded partially through a grant from The Winnipeg Foundation.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Extremely engaged community
- Long history of supporting the careers of many Manitoban writers

- Generally appreciated across all levels of the supply chain
- Some dedicated funders for specific awards
- Hardworking core team
- Team has streamlined administration as much as possible

Weaknesses

- No natural home for the program within the community
- Coalition model meant to be an interim solution and is untenable
- Some prizes have no funders (and no prize purse) while others have funding, but it does not cover any or enough overhead
- Not enough money from current funders
- Requires revenue diversification and more stable funding generally
- Too many objectives dilute effectiveness in specific areas
- Too many awards dilute impact and require irregular schedules
- Inconsistency in who coordinates specific elements of the program
- Fund development program outside of government grants and program sponsors is virtually nonexistent
- Is very limited in terms of human resources (14 awards, promotion, and events primarily managed by one 0.35 FTE person and off the side of two leadership desks)
- Lacks the broad public reach that typically appeals to some funders
- Audience is primarily industry folks leading to an echo-chamber effect

Opportunities

- Renewed interest in program from Manitoba Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism and invitation to submit a proposal for funding
- Investment in feasibility study considered a priority by coalition and funded through external grant
- Can harness engaged community to better understand what government and corporate funders are interested in supporting
- Coalition model, although unsustainable, fosters collaborative spirit
- Untapped potential for major gift and community-level donors
- Untapped potential for corporate sponsors

Threats

- Over-reliance on already limited government funding
- Instability of both government funding and corporate sponsorship
- Prospective funder interest possibly limited to new awards
- General competition for funding within the arts and charitable sector
- Unsustainable operational model and lack of human resources

RESEARCH RESULTS

Prepared by: Kayla Calder, Consultant
Last update: June 10, 2024

Introduction

We began our feasibility study with a comparative review of similar organizations and awards programs across Canada. We developed a research framework and a list of relevant organizations and programs to consider. A combination of desk research and dedicated outreach was utilized to develop an industry ecosystem.

Context Clues

- Due to time constraints, research was focused on other provincial and territorial awards programs (vs. national programs, genre-specific awards programs).
- 13 organizations/programs were researched:
 - Alberta Book Publishing Awards
 - Alberta Literary Awards
 - Atlantic Book Awards
 - BC and Yukon Book Prizes
 - Manitoba Book Awards/Les Prix du livre du Manitoba
 - New Brunswick Book Awards
 - Newfoundland and Labrador Book Awards
 - NorthWords NWT Book Awards
 - Nova Scotia Book Awards
 - Prince Edward Island Book Awards
 - QWF Literary Awards
 - Saskatchewan Book Awards
 - Trillium Book Awards
- Requests for specific information (e.g., budgetary information, human resources) were directed towards main program contacts found online.
- Details of this research will be kept confidential, although anonymized and aggregate information will be shared.

Highlights

We compiled a great deal of information about how programs operate:

- 5 of 13 programs are run by a writers' organizations.
- 4 of 13 programs are run by a standalone organization that focuses entirely on awards (although 2 of 4 split administration between partners).
- 2 of 13 programs are run by the provincial government.

- 1 of 13 programs are run by a publishers' organization (Alberta Book Publishing Awards).
- 1 of 13 programs are run by a coalition or organizations but does not operate as a separate organization (MBA/PLM).

We looked at the charitable status of organizations behind each awards program:

- 7 of 17 organizations are registered charities.
- 7 of 17 organizations are not-for-profits.
- 3 of 17 organizations are provincial or municipal government agencies or departments.

We looked at the language(s) of each awards program:

- 3 of 13 programs are predominantly bilingual.
- 4 of 13 programs are predominantly English with some French awards or awards for other languages (e.g., Cree).
- 6 of 13 programs are English language only.

We looked at the number of distinctive awards associated with each program (annually or in alternating years):

- 6 of 13 programs gave out between 1-5 awards.
- 3 of 13 programs gave out between 5-10 awards.
- 5 of 13 programs gave out more than 10 awards.

We sought out information about key decision-makers and operational support:

- Standalone organizations primarily have standalone boards, although those boards usually include some representation from partner organizations (e.g., the Atlantic Book Awards Society board includes members representing the Dartmouth Book Awards and the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia, as well as other members).
- Programs within the mandate of a broader support organization are governed by that organization's board (e.g., the Alberta Literary Awards are run by the Writers' Guild of Alberta and governed by the WGA board).
- Those organizations/programs with boards had an average of 10 board members listed as currently active.
- 12 of 13 programs have some paid staff support (average of 0.5 FTE spent on the program) and 1 of 13 has been entirely volunteer-run since 2023 due to lack of funding with very minimal support from paid contractors (e.g., event coordination).

We endeavored to gather budgetary information for the various programs:

- We did not receive responses from the two government-run programs (Prince Edward Island Book Awards through the PEI Public Library and the Trillium Book Awards through Ontario Creates).
- Based on the information provided, program costs range wildly—from \$10,000 to \$150,000—with the average falling around \$75,000.
- Those programs on the lower end of the cost spectrum (between \$10,000 and \$50,000) are run by broader support organizations (e.g., the Alberta Book Publishing Awards run by the Book Publishers Association of Alberta, the New Brunswick Book Awards run by the Writers’ Federation of New Brunswick).
- Standalone organizations that are registered charities have the highest budgets (e.g., Saskatchewan Book Awards, the BC and Yukon Book Prizes).

We gathered information about funding sources where available:

- Most organizations/programs are funded by a mix of government funders and private/corporate sponsors and donors, with a heavier reliance on government.
- Every organization/program has at least 2-3 government funders with the exception of the Prince Edward Island Book Awards and the Trillium Book Awards.
- Corporate sponsors include printers, bookstores, couriers/shipping companies, sales agencies, and local businesses.
- Multiple organizations/programs receive funding or support from local post-secondary institutions.
- Some organizations/programs charge a submission fee ranging from \$25-\$50/title.
- Some organizations/programs request financial support from publishers of nomination titles (avg. \$300 per title).
- Those organizations/programs with associated events generally provide complimentary event tickets to nominated authors and charge between \$30-\$100 per ticket for other attendees (with the exception of government departments).

SURVEY RESULTS

Prepared by: Kayla Calder, Consultant

Last update: June 8, 2024

Introduction

In collaboration with the coalition co-leads, we prepared a community needs assessment survey that utilized a range of strategies and skip logic to collect feedback on a number of topics including impact, priority outcomes, and community demographics.

Context Clues

- The response period was April 16-May 10.
- The survey was available in both English and French.
- Promotional partners included the Association of Manitoba Book Publishers, the Winnipeg International Writers Festival, the Manitoba Writers' Guild, the Winnipeg Public Library, and McNally Robinson Booksellers.
- The survey was promoted through email marketing and social media.
- The survey was also sent personally to all award sponsors, funders, and partners as well as Manitoba Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism.
- We received 212 responses:
 - 197 people responded to the English survey
 - 15 people responded to the French survey
- The survey saw a higher proportional response from authors due to grassroots promotional efforts on the part of Ariel Gordon and others.

Highlights

For the purposes of this survey, we asked respondents to select the category that best describes them:

- The majority of respondents selected writers/illustrators (140 respondents, 67%) in addition to other categories (e.g., readers).
- The next largest group was publishing professional (35 respondents, 17%).
- The fewest responses came from book designers (4 respondents, 2%).

To help us understand how familiar respondents are with the program, we asked them to select true statements related to familiarity:

- The majority of respondents said they:
- Watch for and read MBA shortlist announcements (134 respondents, 63%)
- Watch for and read MBA winner announcements (128 respondents, 60%)
- Are very familiar with MBA (113 respondents, 53%)
- Some respondents said they:
- Share MBA shortlist announcements within their personal and/or professional networks (76 respondents, 36%)
- Share MBA winner announcements within their personal and/or professional networks (74 respondents, 35%)
- Some respondents said they had never heard of the awards (9 respondents, 5%).

We asked respondents to share the first three digits of their postal code:

- 206 survey respondents provided an answer.
- Respondents were split primarily between 48 geographic areas.
- There were some notable clusters including R3L (22), R3G (20), and R3M (18).
- Some respondents were from outside of Manitoba but identified former residence and connection to the province and program, respectively.

To help us understand the impact of the program, we measured agreement with statements related to impact using a LIKERT scale:

- 77% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are more likely to read a book if it has been shortlisted for a Manitoba Book Award.
- 82% of respondents said they are more likely to read a book if it has won a Manitoba Book Award.
- 89% of respondents strongly agree or agree that the awards help celebrate Manitoba culture.
- 77% of respondents feel the awards help shape the culture.

We asked respondents whether they or their publishing house have/has been shortlisted for a Manitoba Book Award in the past 10 years:

- 91 respondents said yes (43%).
- 102 respondents said no (48%).
- 10 respondents were unsure (4%).

For those who said they had been shortlisted, we measured agreement with statements related to the impact of being shortlisted using a LIKERT scale:

- 88 people participated in this question (out of 91 survey respondents who said they or their publishing house had been shortlisted).

- 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that being shortlisted resulted in greater recognition/higher profile during the award season in which the book was nominated.
- 77% of respondents said the recognition extended beyond award season.
- 73% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that being shortlisted resulted in increased sales/income/revenue during the award season.
- 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that being shortlisted validated or elevated their sense of shaping Manitoba culture.
- 78% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that being shortlisted was a major source of motivation to confirm their work.

We provided a space for respondents to expand on their answers regarding the impacts of being shortlisted:

- Some respondents felt that only winning impacts sales while others said the MBAs don't have any effect on book sales.
- One person mentioned that being shortlisted resulted in local media interviews with CBC that were then syndicated across Canada to 10 cities.
- One person mentioned that being shortlisted for the awards was a great introduction to the publishing industry and a writing community of which they hadn't previously seen themselves as part.
- Two people mentioned a lack of bookseller engagement in the awards (other than McNally Robinson).
- Some respondents spoke about how the organizers should do more to promote the authors and the work including references to media, readings, etc.
- Some respondents mentioned that the award money was helpful, if not enormous.
- Some people referenced disagreeing or not responding to questions about sales because they weren't sure/didn't have that information.

We asked the 91 respondents who said they had been shortlisted whether they or their publishing house have/has ever won a Manitoba Book Award:

- 67 respondents said yes (74%).
- 19 respondents said no (20%).
- 4 respondents were unsure (5%).

For those who said they had won, we measured agreement with statements related to the impact of being shortlisted using a LIKERT scale:

- 61 people participated in this question (out of 67 survey respondents who said they or their publishing house had won an award).
- 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that winning resulted in greater recognition/higher profile during the award season in which the book won.

- 75% of respondents said winning resulted in increased sales/income/revenue during the award season in which the book won.
- 84% of respondents said winning resulted in greater recognition/higher profile beyond award season (e.g., into the next 6-12 months), and only 64% said winning results in increased sales/income/revenue beyond the award season.
- 93% of respondents said winning validated and/or elevated their sense of shaping Manitoba culture and 82% said it was a source of motivation to continue their work.
- For those who received money as part of winning an award (50 respondents), 68% agreed or strongly agreed that it allowed them to meaningfully support themselves or pursue new professional opportunities.

We provided a space for respondents to expand on their answers regarding the impacts of winning an award:

- One person said being awarded an MBA was one of the “capstones” of their career.
- Some people mentioned that, while it was appreciated, the prize money was not enough to contribute to their expenses meaningfully—if the intention of the awards is to support writers financially, the prize money would need to be increased.
- Some people referenced how winning an award legitimized them or elevated their work in the eyes of publishers.
- One person mentioned that winning the Best First Book Award more than a decade ago has continued to help them.
- People referenced how beneficial winning an award can be for a writer’s CV and reputation, both in Manitoba and beyond.
- One person donated their prize winnings and mentioned that they wished to contribute to the awards program but weren’t sure how to do that.

There are several related goals that the Manitoba Book Awards aim to achieve. We asked survey respondents to rank a number of goals according to how important they believe they should be to the Manitoba Book Awards (as opposed to another organization), with 1 representing the highest priority:

- 173 people responded to the question (24 skipped).
- Generally, there was a broad spread between the goals listed and no clear consensus regarding the most important program goal (i.e., nothing with a score of 7 or higher).
- Assigning points based on rating, the average order is as follows (English):
 - Encouraging readers to seek out work by creators and/or publishers (5.39)
 - Promoting book sales and/or borrowing by the public (5.06)
 - Attracting media attention for creators and/or publishers (4.98)
 - Recognizing excellence in the field within the industry (vs. the public) (4.58)
 - Providing money to creators (i.e., writers, illustrators, designers) (4.18)
 - Hosting an event that celebrates Manitoba creators and/or publishers (4.18)

- Shaping or contributing to Manitoba culture (4.16)
- Generating social media buzz for creators and/or publishers (3.47)
- It should also be noted that, when filtered to omit author/illustrator responses, there was a slight change with “Providing money to creators” and “hosting an event” being switched in position (albeit by a slim margin).
- Due to the nature of the survey and the limited return on time investment, the French scores could not be combined with the English.
- However, it should be noted that the French order was slightly different—the average order according to 15 French respondents is as follows:
 - Hosting an event that celebrates Manitoba creators and/or publishers (5.20)
 - Shaping or contributing to Manitoba culture (5.13)
 - Providing money to creators (i.e., writers, illustrators, designers) (4.80)
 - Recognizing excellence in the field within the industry (vs. the public) (4.73)
 - Promoting book sales and/or borrowing by the public (4.40)
 - Attracting media attention for creators and/or publishers (4.27)
 - Encouraging readers to seek out work by creators and/or publishers (4.27)
 - Generating social media buzz for creators and/or publishers (3.20)

We provided a space for respondents to expand on their answers regarding program goals. To honour confidentiality commitments, some of the notable comments have been paraphrased here:

- Limiting the number of awards would help create more impact.
- Consider simplifying the goals of the program so we can act with purpose.
- It is challenging and/or frustrating when the same people win multiple awards in a given year.
- It is difficult to rank goals as most important because they would rank differently for different career stages.
- The main value of the awards is that they create buzz locally (vs. nationally). The awards help create a sense of community pride.
- The event is the only opportunity for writers, publishers, and public to gather and celebrate together and can be a hook for publicity.
- Cash prizes are helpful but more symbolic than financially impactful.

We asked a selection of optional demographics questions to help us understand if there are any priorities, challenges, or opportunities relevant to specific communities that should be taken into consideration during this process:

- The largest group of respondents were aged 65-79 (24%) followed by people aged 34-44 (21%), 55-64 (17%), and 45-54 (16%).
- 173 respondents said they regularly speak English at home (82%) and 26 regularly speak French (12%).
- The majority of respondents identified as women (55%) and men (25%).

- 44% of respondents did not identify with any equity-seeking groups.
- 17% of respondents noted they were from rural communities, 15% identified as part of the 2SLGBTQI community, 11% identified themselves as people with disabilities, and 10% identified themselves as IBPOC.

We invited respondents to provide additional comments in an open answer space. To honour confidentiality commitments, some of the notable comments have been paraphrased here:

- Thank you for the support and recognition I've received through the program and thank you for leading this process.
- Manitobans often downplay their achievements in the arts, and the awards provide a way to do this in the writing community.
- It is crucial that the awards, or some similar initiative, exist to recognize Manitoba-based writers. It nurtures a healthy ecosystem for writers.
- The coalition structure isn't viable in the long term and can't deliver on its goals in its current form.
- Programs like this have suffered from reduction of funding from the government and, while the community is creative and dedicated, it isn't sustainable long-term.

We invited respondents to identify themselves, if they'd like, and welcome further discussion:

- 83% of respondents chose to stay anonymous.
- 37 respondents shared their names.
- Of those people, 34 people said they would be willing to engage in further discussion.
- Many of the people who identified themselves and expressed a willingness to discuss further were involved in dedicated or group consultations (i.e., publishers, authors, sponsors, and partners).

Data

A selection of graphs showcases survey responses by question can be found using the dashboards below. For privacy purposes, comments and identifying information have been omitted from these dashboards.

English: bit.ly/SurveyResultsEN

Pass: MBA2024

French: bit.ly/SurveyResultsFR

Pass: PLM2024

CONSULTATION RESULTS

Prepared by: Kayla Calder, Consultant
Last update: June 10, 2024

Introduction

We facilitated a number of engagement sessions with informed and interested parties. The goals of each consultation were: (1) To gather additional insights and more in-depth feedback from key constituents and (2) to provide an intentional space for constituents to be heard and get involved.

Context Clues

- 10 consultations took place over the course of eight weeks.
- Some consultations were dedicated 60-minute sessions with (1-3 people and the consultant) while others were 90-minute group sessions (20 people maximum).
- Some sessions took place in-person while others were held virtually.
- The consultant took fastidious notes during meetings for posterity, but the findings were only made available in aggregate/anonymized form for privacy purposes and so participants felt free to share honest opinions and questions.
- Any meeting attendee could request that a comment be omitted from the notes entirely (before or after it was shared).
- No information about the survey results or early recommendations/insights from the consultant were shared during the sessions.
- Generally, each session focused on the same topics and asked similar questions in order to compile overarching thematic findings.
- At the beginning of each session, the consultant provided some context on:
 - Herself and her experience in the field
 - The feasibility study process including distinct phases
 - The major challenges facing the program
 - Distinct reasons for wanting to speak with the interviewee(s)
 - Engagement etiquette including encouragement to speak from a place of lived experience and transparency about notetaking and how the findings of each conversation will be used
- At the end of each session, the consultant provided an overview of next steps in the feasibility study process and when they would likely receive the next update.

Highlights

To better understand each participant's connection to the awards and familiarity with how they are funded, administered, and promoted, we asked them to share their background/experience with the program.

- There was a range of experiences with the program including people involved in founding/running some aspect of the awards (past and present), award nominees or recipients, sponsors/funders who are familiar with the award they support and only tangentially aware of other programs, event attendees, etc.
- The consultations allowed for perspectives from the following groups:
 - Coalition members
 - Award sponsors/funders/partners
 - Key community members and organizations
 - Manitoban publishers
 - Manitoban authors
- Participants were fairly transparent about the range and limits of their familiarity—specifically regarding how the awards are administered and funded.

The awards program tries to be many things to many people. The program struggles to meet all of the intended objectives—both financially and in terms of human resources and landscape—and the program falls short on some key aspects, much to the chagrin of community members. We asked participants to share their thoughts on the most *important* impact(s) and outcome(s) of the program. A clear focus may inform the mission of the program moving forward.

- This question was one of the most stirring in almost all consultations.
- Related outcomes discussed included:
 - Getting money into the hands of writers
 - Providing writers with a CV boost/career development
 - Providing writers with a morale boost, motivation, and encouragement
 - Promoting books by Manitoban writers to new readers (through publicity efforts, library and bookstore promotion, etc.)
 - Coordinating an event where community members can gather
 - Promoting and/or celebrating publishers
 - Utilizing the program and/or event to support advocacy efforts for sustained/increased arts funding
- In some cases, the responses aligned with the overarching focus of the participant and/or their organization.
- For example, reader-facing organizations placed book promotion and awareness raising at the top of their list, while writer-facing organizations felt the priority outcome was providing authors with prestige, encouragement, motivation, and money.
- In other cases, the responses were surprising, such as publishers determining that money to authors is the priority while authors felt expanded readership is the main priority.
- Overall, opinions were varied and there was no clear consensus across separate consultations

- The conversations and lack of consensus aligns with the results of a similar question in the community needs assessment survey

The program currently facilitates 14 separate awards, some of which are given out every other year. Only some of the awards have funders and only a handful of those funders provide support for administrative costs (which is minimal). Given the challenges being faced in terms of reliable funding and human resources, streamlining the program to include fewer awards must be considered. We asked participants whether they felt all of the awards are equally impactful, and, if not, which are the most impactful and why.

- Once again, there was hesitancy among almost all participants to prioritize definitively.
- Some participants felt the McNally Robinson Book of the Year Awards were the most impactful due to their broad appeal and the profile they receive while others felt the awards that focus on historically underrepresented groups are most important (e.g., the Manitowapow Award/Prix Manitowapow, le Prix littéraire Rue-Deschambault, and the Lansdowne Prize for Poetry).
- However, it was widely understood that the dearth of eligible books published in a given year is a challenge for the more dedicated awards.
- Unsurprisingly, some participants prioritized the awards they are more closely involved with (e.g., currently fund or funded in the past, helped establish).
- Generally, it was widely agreed by participants that too many awards dilute the impact of the program overall and streamlining would be beneficial, however there was no clear consensus about which awards should be prioritized.

We asked participants how they think the program should be funded in an ideal world. Relatedly, we asked them how they think the program could realistically be funded.

- Again, this question yielded a great deal of discussion.
- Generally, consultation participants primarily fell on one of two sides of the “ideal funding” question:
 - Those who are not affiliated with a government funding body felt strongly that operating funds for the award program should come from the government (e.g., relevant provincial departments, MAC, WAC)
 - Those who were more closely affiliated with government funders felt that operating funds should primarily come from other sources including private donations, corporate sponsorship, publisher contributions, and public funders such as The Winnipeg Foundation
- Overall, it was agreed that the most realistic approach—and likely the most stable in the long-term—would be a mix of revenue streams including government funders, individual donors, corporate sponsors, and public funders.

- However, it was widely understood that this mix of funders requires significantly more management, and support for fundraising overhead would be very difficult to secure from all potential funders.
- A number of prospective corporate sponsors and private donors were mentioned across consultations including the Assiniboine Credit Union, the Asper family, the Richardson family, the Chipman family, the Buhler family, and their relevant private/family/public foundations.
- There was some discussion about donor/sponsor recognition (e.g., naming rights to specific awards vs. a pool of funds and general hierarchical recognition based on amount similar to event sponsorship).
- Most participants agreed that multi-year funding commitments would be vital for increased stability.

The event has fluctuated over the years—both in terms of format, budget, and impact. We asked how important the event was in each participant’s opinion to the overall program and achieving priority goals. In some cases, we expanded to ask what an ideal event looks like.

- Once again, this was a somewhat divisive question.
- While almost all participants feel the event is nice to have—a good opportunity to connect and celebrate, beneficial for cross-promotion to readers, and a chance to engage policy makers—only a handful felt it was integral enough to warrant being a main objective of the program.
- A small group of participants felt strongly that the event had diminishing returns and was not a beneficial investment of funds and resources.
- However, almost everyone consulted did closely associate the program with the event to the point where the consultant had to clarify in the beginning of consultations that questions were primarily related to the awards program (adjudication, shortlist, winners, prize purses, etc.), and not the awards event.
- Those who were adamant that the event was integral to the program cited the need for community building and how the event acts as a hook for media/publicity.
- For the event itself, the overarching feedback was that it should land somewhere between “gala” and “grassroots,” with many people referencing the event held at the Winnipeg Art Gallery as a model.
- Some suggestions were made for how the event might proceed including rotating responsibilities between relevant organizations and as a grassroots initiative organized outside of the actual award program (e.g., organized by publishers, authors, MRB, or the festival).
- Although there wasn’t consensus, the general sentiment about the event coming out of all consultations was “beloved and nice to have but not a top priority.”

Given the general agreement that promotion of books/authors to readers is important, we asked what is working or not working in terms of program promotion.

- This question didn't yield many specific insights.
- Generally, participants agreed that promotional efforts could be stronger, and some cited the program as a tool for combating diminishing review space and the loss of legacy media.
- Multiple people brought up that promotion should be focused on local coverage (e.g., local presses, advertising on public transportation, dedicated issues of *Prairie Books Now* and *Prairie Fire*), while a selection felt that promotion outside of Manitoba is vital and necessary.
- Some participants referenced specific challenges associated with workflow (i.e., not getting the information early enough) and wished the website was more effective and user friendly.
- Some consultations included discussion about the priority audience and there was difficulty determining both the ideal and actual audiences.
- Generally, it was commented that current target audience is very insular.

We asked participants to share some thoughts on the coalition model/structure and to identify any gaps. We prefaced this question by reminding participants that the coalition was created as an interim solution and that interim period has now, ostensibly, passed.

- Participants had varied familiarity with how the coalition functions.
- Generally, more participants expressed understanding about the need to explore new models and that continuation with the coalition is not a sustainable option.
- Furthermore, all participants stated or agreed with the assertion that there is no natural home for this program, as is the case in other provinces and despite some organizations having an explicit mandate that aligns (i.e., MWG).
- Some participants mentioned strengths (e.g., community collaboration, broader reach) and gaps (e.g., inefficiencies, time required to coordinate across four organizations), but mostly the question prompted discussions about possible models to explore.
- Some of the suggestions for possible scenarios to explore included:
 - Having the separate awards administered by their sponsors/funders
 - Creating a standalone organization with an independent board made up of community members
 - Creating a subsidiary or funded position within an existing organization (e.g., MAC) that relies on umbrella operations but is a separate initiative
 - Incorporating the awards as a part of the festival's new structure
 - Bringing new members into the coalition and redistributing responsibilities
 - Merging with the Saskatchewan (and possibly Alberta) book awards
 - Disbanding the awards entirely and creating space for something new
- However, almost every one of these ideas was contradicted or deemed ineffective/challenging by other participants over the course of all consultations.
- Some participants mentioned the challenge of having the AMBP involved (due to issues of and/or perception of a conflict of interest).

- The closest thing to receiving consensus was the suggestion of a standalone organization, although enthusiasm for this idea was tepid at best and, in a few cases, participants were confident that the program would not have the weight to be funded as a standalone organization and/or would not be enthusiastic about working with a new organization.

In closing, we asked participants to share one thing (e.g., finding, data set) that they would like to see included in the final report coming out of this process.

- Most participants simply expressed appreciation that the strategic review was taking place.
- Some requests for specific information included (if applicable):
 - An outline for a sustainable funding model
 - Information on how other provinces manage their programs
 - A plan for community leadership and someone to “own” the program and take on the administrative risk
 - The role that can be played by authors and by public libraries
 - How the program could be streamlined and/or revamped

We invited participants to share any additional comments they deem relevant to the process at hand.

- Multiple participants mentioned issues related to the types of books that are recognized (e.g., self-published books that are not widely available).
- Some participants mentioned the importance of a jury of peers (e.g., children’s books writers for children’s book awards) and efforts that should be taken to avoid having one writer win multiple awards in a year.
- Some participants mentioned the possibility of changing the timeline to better suit festival timing.
- Data has not historically been collected on the impact that award shortlists have on book borrowing or sales, but anecdotal information implies that it has some impact, but it is not ground-breaking in the short- or long-term.
- The history associated with the awards is important and should be preserved, no matter what the future holds.
- It is important to provide opportunities for everyone in the ecosystem (authors, illustrators, designers, publishers, librarians, and booksellers) to coexist, collaborate, and celebrate books together.
- Generally, everyone expressed appreciation for the team behind the coalition who has ensured the awards continued for as long as they did.