



How to Start & Run a Writing Community

VA HSR&D Cyberseminar
December 16, 2019

Gemmae M. Fix, PhD, Investigator, Center for Healthcare Organization & Implementation Research (CHOIR); Research Assistant Professor, Boston University School of Public Health. CDA acknowledgement



 Gemmae.Fix@va.gov

 [@GemmaeFix](https://twitter.com/GemmaeFix)

Traci H. Abraham, PhD, Investigator, Center for Mental Healthcare & Outcomes Research (CeMHOR) and the South Central Mental Illness Research, Education & Clinical Center (SC MIRECC)



 Traci.Abraham@va.gov

Alison B. Hamilton, PhD, MPH, Chief Officer of Implementation & Policy, Center for the Study of Healthcare Innovation, and Policy (CSHIIP) and Research Anthropologist in the UCLA Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences



 Alison.Hamilton@va.gov

 [@alisonh3](https://twitter.com/alisonh3)

- The views expressed in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
 - No conflicts of interest.
 - Dr. Fix is a VA HSR&D Career Development Awardee at the Bedford VA (CDA 14-156).
-

Acknowledgements

CHOIR WW volunteers (2019-20): Katya Anderson, Rendi Bolton, Jacqui Boudreau, Rani Elwy, Graeme Fincke , Lauren Gaj, Tine Hartmann, Abby Herbst, Alexandra Howard, Keith McInnes, Chris Miller, Jacquelyn Pendergast, Nick McMahon, Cami Pimentel, Stephanie Robinson, Melissa Wachterman, Carolyn Wehler, Renda Wiener, Hill Wolfe, Anna Zogas

CeMHOR Scientific Writers' Month Planning Committee and volunteers: Sara Landes, Eva Woodward, Robin Smith, Ashley McDaniel, Barbara Curtis, Mitzi Mosier, Tina Gill

CSHIIP Writers' Week volunteers: Annie Sumberg, Donna Washington

Presentation Goals

1. Learn collaborative strategies for increasing writing productivity & quality
2. Understand how to develop your own writing community
3. Learn strategies to plan, promote & evaluate
4. Reduce writing-related stress through awareness of others' experiences

Poll

What is your biggest writing barrier?

- Finding time to write
- Finding time to analyze data for the paper
- Getting stuck/writer's block
- Not knowing what to write about
- Not using co-authors efficiently

Overview

- Writing communities
- Three centers, six models
- Develop your own writing community
- Promoting your writing event
- Evaluating your writing event

Writing Community

- Writing is hard! Find support.
- Provides accountability & deadlines
- Opportunity to learn from others:
 - Strategies
 - Where to submit



Three Centers, Six
Models |

1. CHOIR Writers' Group

- Forum for people to give & receive constructive, collegial feedback on papers in progress
- Provides friendly venue to learn approaches & strategies
- Papers in any form are welcome, from early drafts, to almost ready for submission, to “revise & resubmit”
- Monthly Meeting
 - Begin w/paper overview including history & what the author hopes to gain
- Paper Presenter
 - Open to everyone
- Attendees=Reviewers
 - All members of CHOIR are encouraged to attend

2. CHOIR Writers' Week

- Built on Writers' Group
- Started June 2017
- Held 2x year
- 6th annual Writers' Week, February 2020
- Previous Themes
 - Writing for impact
 - Dissemination w/Veterans
 - Grant writing
 - How to start the writing process

Day	Time	Activity	Description
Friday	All Day	Writers' Week Prep	Get rid of writing distractions by cleaning office & reviewing emails.
Monday	9-10	Breakfast	Kickoff
Tuesday	All Day	Writing Day	Meetings encouraged to be canceled or dedicated to writing.
Wednesday	10-11	Research Conference	Standing CHOIR weekly activity.
Thursday	All Day	Writing Day	Meetings encouraged to be canceled or dedicated to writing.
Thursday	12-1	Lunch Time Activity	Brownbag lunch around a topic; often invite guest.
Friday	4– 8	Social event	Off site celebration of productive week.

CHOIR Writers' Week June 2019

Day	Time	Activity	Description	Location
Fri 6/7	All Day	Writers' Week Prep	Clean up your desk; clear out your email; get rid of those writing distractions.	Your office.
Mon 6/10	9-10	Breakfast	Kickoff Writers' week with your colleagues. Bring breakfast & even something to share. [Organizers' contact info]	[bldg. location + call in]
Tues 6/11	All day	Writing Day	Set aside some time to write alone or with colleagues.	Wherever you write best. We have also held [] 9-4
Wed 6/12	10-11	Research Conference	Research Conference will feature a panel discussion of how to get the writing process started. The emphasis will be on things to think about from a range of perspectives, from Research Assistants to Project Managers to Investigators. Panelists include: Michelle Bovin, Kate Iverson, Ryann Engle, Gemmae Fix, Elizabeth Maguire, Traci Abraham, Rendi Bolton [Organizers' contact info]	[bldg. location + call in]
Wed 6/12	11-12	Writers' Group		[bldg. location + call in]
Thurs 6/13	All Day	Writing Day	Set aside some time to write alone or with colleagues.	Wherever you write best. We have also held the Bedford Solarium 9-4
Thurs 6/13	12-1	Lunch Discussion w/guest	"Writing from the reader's perspective" We will talk about strategies for writing clearly, avoiding common advice like "avoid the passive", and instead focusing on programmatic steps to make sentences clear and ideas impactful. [Organizers' contact info]	[bldg. location + call in]
Fri 6/14	4– 8pm	CHOIR Boston Picnic	Please bring your favorite dish, drink, or dessert – whatever you wish. Family members are welcome! Please RSVP! [Organizers' contact info]	[off site location]

Lessons Learned

Challenges

- ✓ Gemmae tried to do all the work
- ✓ Too many activities, not enough time to write
- ✓ Exposed underlying issues

Successes

- ✓ Reframed local writing culture
- ✓ Learned about co-workers' experiences
- ✓ Identified local resources
- ✓ Opportunity to connect to larger VA HSR&D and #AcWri communities

3. CeMHOR Writing Buddies

- Accountability partners
- Goal is to increase writing productivity by:
 - writing consistently during the week
 - planning realistic writing-related goals for the coming year
 - logging productivity (in minutes or words) and accomplishments
 - holding each other accountable

Implementation

- Get yourself a writing buddy!
- Develop a log that meets your individual needs
- Set your individual goals for the year
- Identify a time during each day in which to write
- Agree on what will constitute “writing”
- Identify a day to submit the writing productivity log to your buddy

The ribbon shows the Home tab selected. The font section includes Calibri, 11pt, bold, italic, underline, and various alignment options like center, right, and justify. The number section includes General, currency, percent, and date/time formats. The styles section includes Conditional Formatting and Table Tools.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
2019 Writing Goals						
State Goal #1						
State Goal #2						
Date	Day	Start Time	Stop Time	Total Time	Worked on (e.g., abstract)	Notes (e.g., stuck points, challenges overcome, etc.)
2/25/19	MON			0:00		
2/26/19	TUE			0:00		
2/27/19	WED			0:00		
2/28/19	THU			0:00		
3/1/19	FRI			0:00		
3/2/19	SAT			0:00		
3/3/19	SUN			0:00		
3/4/19	MON			0:00		
3/5/19	TUE			0:00		
3/6/19	WED			0:00		
3/7/19	THU			0:00		
3/8/19	FRI			0:00		
3/9/19	SAT			0:00		
3/10/19	SUN			0:00		
3/11/19	MON			0:00		
3/12/19	TUE			0:00		
3/13/19	WED			0:00		
3/14/19	THU			0:00		
3/15/19	FRI			0:00		
3/16/19	SAT			0:00		
3/17/19	SUN			0:00		
3/18/19	MON			0:00		
3/19/19	TUE			0:00		
3/20/19	WED			0:00		
3/21/19	THU			0:00		
3/22/19	FRI			0:00		
3/23/19	SAT			0:00		
3/24/19	SUN			0:00		
3/25/19	MON			0:00		
3/26/19	TUE			0:00		
3/27/19	WED			0:00		
3/28/19	THU			0:00		
3/29/19	FRI			0:00		
3/30/19	SAT			0:00		
3/31/19	SUN			0:00		
4/1/19	MON			0:00		
4/2/19	TUE			0:00		
4/3/19	WED			0:00		
4/4/19	THU			0:00		
4/5/19	FRI			0:00		
4/6/19	SAT			0:00		
4/7/19	SUN			0:00		
4/8/19	MON			0:00		
4/9/19	TUE			0:00		
4/10/19	WED			0:00		
4/11/19	THU			0:00		
4/12/19	FRI			0:00		
4/13/19	SAT			0:00		
4/14/19	SUN			0:00		
4/15/19	MON			0:00		
4/16/19	TUE			0:00		
4/17/19	WED			0:00		
4/18/19	THU			0:00		
4/19/19	FRI			0:00		
4/20/19	SAT			0:00		
4/21/19	SUN			0:00		
4/22/19	MON			0:00		
4/23/19	TUE			0:00		
4/24/19	WED			0:00		
4/25/19	THU			0:00		
4/26/19	FRI			0:00		
4/27/19	SAT			0:00		
4/28/19	SUN			0:00		
4/29/19	MON			0:00		
4/30/19	TUE			0:00		
5/1/19	WED			0:00		
5/2/19	THU			0:00		
5/3/19	FRI			0:00		
5/4/19	SAT			0:00		
5/5/19	SUN			0:00		
5/6/19	MON			0:00		
5/7/19	TUE			0:00		
5/8/19	WED			0:00		
5/9/19	THU			0:00		
5/10/19	FRI			0:00		
5/11/19	SAT			0:00		
5/12/19	SUN			0:00		
5/13/19	MON			0:00		
5/14/19	TUE			0:00		
5/15/19	WED			0:00		
5/16/19	THU			0:00		
5/17/19	FRI			0:00		
5/18/19	SAT			0:00		
5/19/19	SUN			0:00		
5/20/19	MON			0:00		
5/21/19	TUE			0:00		
5/22/19	WED			0:00		
5/23/19	THU			0:00		
5/24/19	FRI			0:00		
5/25/19	SAT			0:00		
5/26/19	SUN			0:00		
5/27/19	MON			0:00		
5/28/19	TUE			0:00		
5/29/19	WED			0:00		
5/30/19	THU			0:00		
5/31/19	FRI			0:00		
6/1/19	SAT			0:00		
6/2/19	SUN			0:00		
6/3/19	MON			0:00		
6/4/19	TUE			0:00		
6/5/19	WED			0:00		
6/6/19	THU			0:00		
6/7/19	FRI			0:00		
6/8/19	SAT			0:00		
6/9/19	SUN			0:00		
6/10/19	MON			0:00		
6/11/19	TUE			0:00		
6/12/19	WED			0:00		
6/13/19	THU			0:00		
6/14/19	FRI			0:00		
6/15/19	SAT			0:00		
6/16/19	SUN			0:00		
6/17/19	MON			0:00		
6/18/19	TUE			0:00		
6/19/19	WED			0:00		
6/20/19	THU			0:00		
6/21/19	FRI			0:00		
6/22/19	SAT			0:00		
6/23/19	SUN			0:00		
6/24/19	MON			0:00		
6/25/19	TUE			0:00		
6/26/19	WED			0:00		
6/27/19	THU			0:00		
6/28/19	FRI			0:00		
6/29/19	SAT			0:00		
6/30/19	SUN			0:00		
7/1/19	MON			0:00		
7/2/19	TUE			0:00		
7/3/19	WED			0:00		
7/4/19	THU			0:00		
7/5/19	FRI			0:00		
7/6/19	SAT			0:00		
7/7/19	SUN			0:00		
7/8/19	MON			0:00		
7/9/19	TUE			0:00		
7/10/19	WED			0:00		
7/11/19	THU			0:00		
7/12/19	FRI			0:00		
7/13/19	SAT			0:00		
7/14/19	SUN			0:00		
7/15/19	MON			0:00		
7/16/19	TUE			0:00		
7/17/19	WED			0:00		
7/18/19	THU			0:00		
7/19/19	FRI			0:00		
7/20/19	SAT			0:00		
7/21/19	SUN			0:00		
7/22/19	MON			0:00		
7/23/19	TUE			0:00		
7/24/19	WED			0:00		
7/25/19	THU			0:00		
7/26/19	FRI			0:00		
7/27/19	SAT			0:00		
7/28/19	SUN			0:00		
7/29/19	MON			0:00		
7/30/19	TUE			0:00		
7/31/19	WED			0:00		
8/1/19	THU			0:00		
8/2/19	FRI			0:00		
8/3/19	SAT			0:00		
8/4/19	SUN			0:00		
8/5/19	MON			0:00		
8/6/19	TUE			0:00		
8/7/19	WED			0:00		
8/8/19	THU			0:00		
8/9/19	FRI			0:00		
8/10/19	SAT			0:00		
8/11/19	SUN			0:00		
8/12/19	MON			0:00		
8/13/19	TUE			0:00		
8/14/19	WED			0:00		
8/15/19	THU			0:00		
8/16/19	FRI			0:00		
8/17/19	SAT			0:00		
8/18/19	SUN			0:00		
8/19/19	MON			0:00		
8/20/19	TUE			0:00		
8/21/19	WED			0:00		
8/22/19	THU			0:00		
8/23/19	FRI			0:00		
8/24/19	SAT			0:00		
8/25/19	SUN			0:00		
8/26/19	MON			0:00		
8/27/19	TUE			0:00		
8/28/19	WED			0:00		
8/29/19	THU			0:00		
8/30/19	FRI			0:00		
8/31/19	SAT			0:00		
9/1/19	SUN			0:00		
9/2/19	MON			0:00		
9/3/19	TUE			0:00		
9/4/19	WED			0:00		
9/5/19	THU			0:00		
9/6/19	FRI			0:00		
9/7/19	SAT			0:00		
9/8/19	SUN			0:00		
9/9/19	MON			0:00		
9/10/19	TUE			0:00		
9/11/19	WED			0:00		
9/12/19	THU			0:00		
9/13/19	FRI			0:00		
9/14/19	SAT			0:00		
9/15/19	SUN			0:00		
9/16/19	MON			0:00		
9/17/19	TUE			0:00		
9/18/19	WED			0:00		
9/19/19	THU			0:00		
9/20/19	FRI			0:00		
9/21/19	SAT			0:00		
9/22/19	SUN			0:00		
9/23/19	MON			0:00		
9/24/19	TUE			0:00		
9/25/19	WED			0:00		
9/26/19	THU			0:00		
9/27/19	FRI			0:00		
9/28/19	SAT			0:00		
9/29/19	SUN			0:00		
9/30/19	MON			0:00		
10/1/19	TUE			0:00		

Lessons Learned

Challenges

- ✓ Remembering to log activity
- ✓ Remembering to submit to writing buddy
- ✓ Holding buddies accountable

Successes

- ✓ Connecting with a writing buddy
- ✓ Sharing challenges and success
- ✓ Raised awareness of the importance of writing each day
- ✓ Elevated writing as an important and worthwhile activity

4. CeMHOR Scientific Writers' Month (SWM)

- Inspired by Gemmae's efforts at the Bedford VA
- Brought before faculty at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS)
- Director of UAMS Center for Health Services Research requested a month of writing-related activities
- SMW Planning Committee established to develop and implement at UAMS and the VA Center for Mental Healthcare & Outcomes Research (CeMHOR) in North Little Rock, AR

Goals of SWM

- To build a sense of cohesiveness
- To spark joy in the act of writing
- To increase writing-related productivity

MARCH SCIENTIFIC WRITERS MONTH		
March 4-8	March 4	Breakfast Bash , 9-10am, 2 nd floor conference room – Intro to Scientific Writers Month – Goal setting exercise
	March 8	Workshop: Creative Writing – Short exercises to (re)ignite your passion for writing, get your writing mojo on, and jump-start the month! – Hosted offsite at the Blue Sail , 3-5pm
March 11-15	March 11	Breakfast Huddle , 9-10am, 2 nd floor conference room – Discuss progress toward personal goals, hurdles overcome, frustrations, challenges – Introduction to productivity tracking and writing buddy concept
	March 12	Works-in-Progress Workshop – A product is presented at any stage of development to a small group of peers for feedback – 2 nd floor conference room, 10-12pm
	March 14	Presentation: Choosing between Endnote and Zotero – An overview of the programs – 2 nd floor conference room, 1-2pm (10 minutes)
March 18-22	March 18	Breakfast Huddle , 10-11am, 2 nd floor conference room – Discuss progress toward personal goals, hurdles overcome, frustrations, challenges
	March 19 th	Presentation: Intellectual property and negotiating authorship – Presentation + question and answer session – Room 111 PRI from 12-1pm
	March 21st	Workshop: Structured writing activity – An opportunity to write together, away from the distractions of email – Hosted offsite at the Blue Sail , 9-12pm
March 25-29	March 25	Breakfast Huddle , 9-10am, 2 nd floor conference room – Discuss progress toward personal goals, hurdles overcome, challenges, etc. – Learning styles inventory
	March 29	Wrap Up Ceremony and Happy Hour – Nominations and prizes – Noting accomplishments (at the group-level) – Hosted offsite @ Hibernia Irish Pub , 4:30-6pm

Getting SWM on Its Feet

1. Gaining leadership buy-in
2. Developing activities
 - four SWM committee meetings
3. Planning activities
 - scheduling activities in a calendar
4. Implementation
 - tangible and intangible components

Implementation: Tangible Components

- Identify volunteers to post promotional materials and prep rooms
- Send email invitations for each activity two weeks before SWM
- Construct and send reminder emails for each activity
- Reserve space for on and off-site activities
- Create awards and identify recipients
- Print materials (for workshops, activities at Breakfast Bashes, etc.)

Implementation: Intangible Components

- Announcements at faculty and staff meetings will generate enthusiasm
- Be **physically present** at all activities to establish continuity
- Host weekly Breakfast Bashes to set the tone
 - prep food to share
 - check in on goals and progress
- Keep activities inclusive while remaining focused on writing built cohesion
- Host an off-site Happy Hour Wrap-up to bring everything to a close
 - distribute any awards
 - promotional materials give-away
 - share accomplishments

Lessons Learned

Challenges

- ✓ Identifying dates and times for so many events over an entire month
- ✓ One person largely responsible for implementation
- ✓ Implementing at two sites
- ✓ Developing inclusive activities

Successes

- ✓ A well-rounded planning committee
- ✓ Built a sense of group cohesion
- ✓ Increased writing productivity
- ✓ We really had fun!!

5. CSHIIP Writers' Week: A Pilot

- Inspired by Gemmae's and Traci's efforts & Women's Health Focused Research Area meeting about writing
 - Scheduled during same week as other COINs' writer's weeks
- Started small (not much advance notice)
 - Not an official Center-wide activity (but not exclusive)

Agenda

Day	Time	Activity	Description	Location
Mon, 6/10	11 am	WW Launch (21 attendees)	Kick off WW with your colleagues. Discuss your goal(s) and strategies. Bring a snack if you'd like.	WLA Conference Room West & VANTS 48339
Tues, 6/11	All day	Writing day	Set aside some time to write alone or with colleagues.	Up to you and your work arrangements!
Wed, 6/12	10 am	Qual Methods Group seminar	Topic: Writing Qualitative Papers	Virtual and @Sep
Thurs, 6/13	All day	Writing day	Set aside some time to write alone or with colleagues.	Up to you and your work arrangements!
Fri, 6/14	12:30 pm	WW Wrap-Up	Check in on goals achieved, evaluate WW, discuss future WW	WLA Conference Room West & VANTS 48339

Some possibly activities:

- Focus standing meetings on writing*
- Cancel standing meetings if possible to make time for writing*
- Schedule meetings specific to writing for different projects*
- Block time in your calendar for writing*
- Identify a writing buddy and set time to work together
- Send progress updates to the Writers' Week group*
- Connect on social media about writing activities/accomplishments*

Writers' Week Launch

Name	Twitter account (optional)	Goal (to fill in during kick-off)
1.		
1.		
1.		
1.		
1.		

**Focus on something that could be done within the week*

Goals included:

- Drafting intro
- Writing outline
- Coding data
- Rewriting rejected paper
- Writing an abstract
- Revising a manuscript
- Drafting discussion, sending to co-authors
- Creating shell tables
- Synthesizing edits from co-authors



Updated and circulated daily + daily quote

Lessons Learned

Challenges

- ✓ Notifying everyone in short time-frame
- ✓ Limited awareness
- ✓ Some couldn't participate as much as they wanted to

Successes

- ✓ Everyone made progress on their goals
- ✓ Sharing resources, strengthening relationships
- ✓ People at different career stages came together
- ✓ It wasn't that much work

6. CSHIIP Roundtable Writing Review

- ~One month after Writers' Week
- Inspired by suggestion from Tanya Olmos-Ochoa
- 5 people submitted sections of manuscripts in progress, 7 attended
- Scheduled 2 hours for in-person roundtable review
 - ~10 minutes reading & commenting in silence, ~5 minutes sharing comments with author
- Each person received 6 people's comments and edits
- Very productive!

Finding or Creating a Writing Community

Join existing community

- In-person
 - Local writing organization
 - Community Ed
 - University-Based
- Virtual
 - Social Media #AcWri
 - Online communities (*e.g., National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity 14-Day Writing Challenge*)

Create your own community

- Peers
- Team Members
- Research Center or University-Based



Planning a Writing Event

Plan Your Writing Event

- Planning Team
- Timing & Activities
- Promotion
- *Write!*
- Evaluate

Planning Team

- Distributes work
- Diverse ideas = event(s) that suits diverse needs
- Help w/scheduling & logistics
- Tailored to local context
- Help raise awareness

Activities & Timing

- Start Small
 - Organize a few, low-key events
 - Start w/1 simple event/activity & adapt
- Dedicate (most) time to free writing
- Build on existing structures (research team), activities (center events) & culture
- Frequency
- Timing
 - June (after grants/before Summer vacations) & January (after grants & the holidays)

Promotional Strategies

Promotion builds anticipation, raises awareness & increases engagement

- Leadership support
 - Make announcements, send emails &/or actively participated in events
- Maximize participation
 - Clear, well-timed emails w/ event information
 - Outlook Calendar Invitations
- Out of Office, "*It's Writers' Week; I'm only checking email once a day*"
- Progress updates
- Inspirational writing quotes
- Posters
- Twitter

Writers' Week

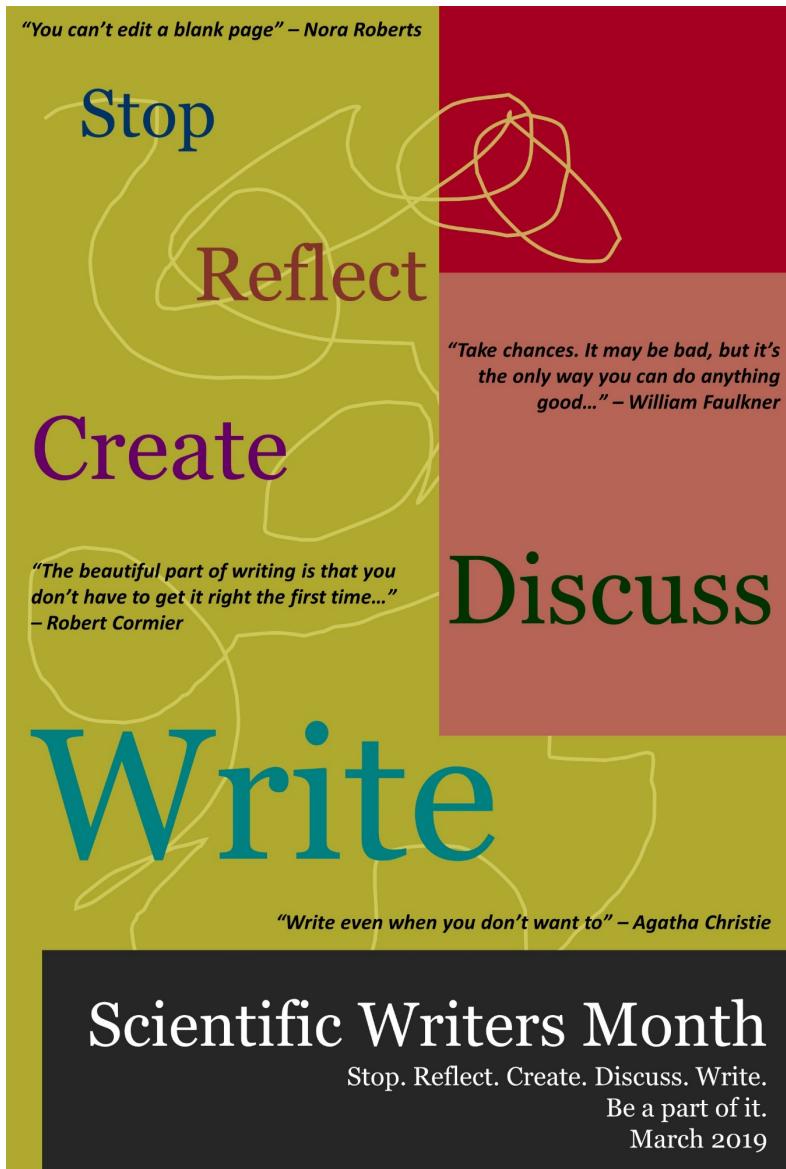
January 14-18, 2019

Theme: Grant Writing

Tweet @VA_CHOIR

#CHOIRwrites #WritersWeek #AcWri
#GrantWriting #GetYourManuscriptOut





Poster for Scientific Writers' Month

SWM Theme: Traci Abraham

Creative Design: Ashley McDaniel

#CHOIRWrites



Megan R. Gerber, MD, MPH and 2 others liked

HSR&D Bedford/Boston @VA_CHOIR · Jun 13

Checking in with all of our #WritersWeek participants...how are those papers coming along? #CHOIRWrites

1 Retweeted



Samantha Connolly and 1 other Retweeted

Chris Miller @christojoe1979 · Jun 12

@VA_CHOIR Writers' Week discussion on launching the writing process! Thanks to our panelists @KateMlverson @GemmaeFix @RyannLEngle @RendiBolton @PhTraci @elizabethmags and Michelle! #CHOIRWrites



2

2

8



Hillary J Mull, PhD, MPP and 1 other liked

Ryann L Engle, MPH @RyannLEngle · Jun 10

Edit a proof & finish/start results on 2 other papers that have just been sitting there...silently judging the amount of time since I last worked on them... 🤦

#CHOIRwrites

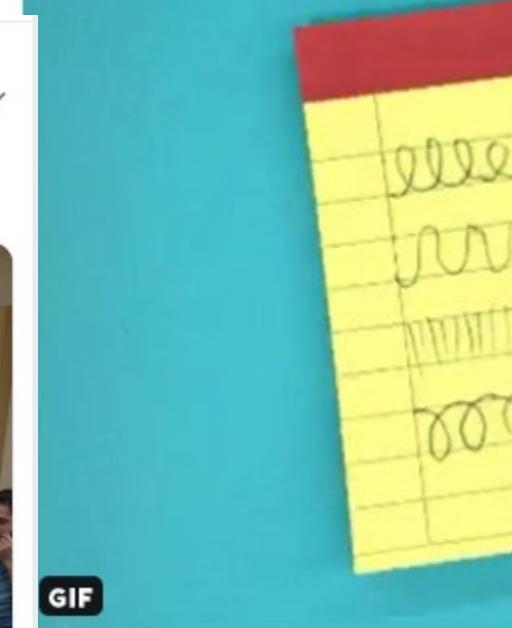
Jenny Sullivan, PhD @JLSullivan10

What are your writing goals this week? Mine are to edit a paper proof & get a rejected manuscript ready to be resubmitted. #choirwrites @VA_CHOIR
twitter.com/christojoe1979...

1



3



Cami B. Pimentel and 3 others liked

Renda Wiener @RendaWiener · Jun 12

Great panel discussion between Bedford and Boston CHOIR on how to get writing started. Very inspiring for Writers week! #CHOIRWrites @VA_CHOIR @vahsrd



2

6



Evaluation

Writing events benefit from continual improvement which requires systematic evaluation

- Survey (REDCap)
- Anonymous feedback on what works & what doesn't
- Information on what activities people participated in
- Ideas for future events
- May illuminate other aspects of Center culture

Evaluation: CHOIR Survey Questions

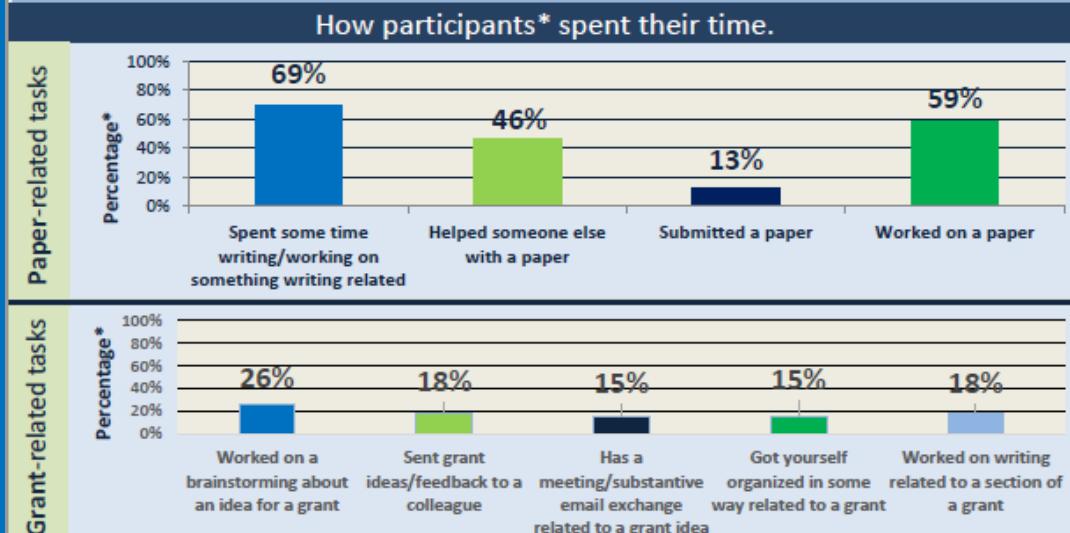
- What is your role in CHOIR?
- Did you participate in Writers' Week?
- How did Writers' Week affect your meetings?
- Which Writers' Week events did you attend?
- Which of the following did you accomplish?
- How likely are you to use something you learned during Writers' Week in your own writing?
- Would you be interested in participating in Writers' Week again?
- How often should we have Writers' Week?
- Requests for comments, feedback & suggestions

CHOIR Writers' Week Activities

January 14th-18th 2019

Activity	Description	Attendance *
M: Breakfast	Kickoff Writers' week with your colleagues. Discuss your grant writing strategies & goals. Bring breakfast & even something to share. Grant Writing Resources	64%
T: Writing Day	Set aside some time to write alone or with colleagues. Focus on grant preparatory activities like: literature reviews; writing specific aims; or set up meetings to discuss grant ideas.	28%
W: Research Conference	Mock Scientific Merit Review Board (SMRB) Grant Review Materials	74%
Th: Writing	Set aside some time to write alone or with colleagues. Focus on grant preparatory activities like: literature reviews; writing specific aims; or set up meetings to discuss grant ideas.	31%
Th: Happy Hour	After a long week of writing, come relax with your colleagues	--
F: Tips on different grant sections	End Writers' Week with lunch with your colleagues. Graeme Fincke, Renda Wiener & Tine Hartmann will facilitate a discussion around grant writing strategies and best practices. Grant Writing Resources	59%

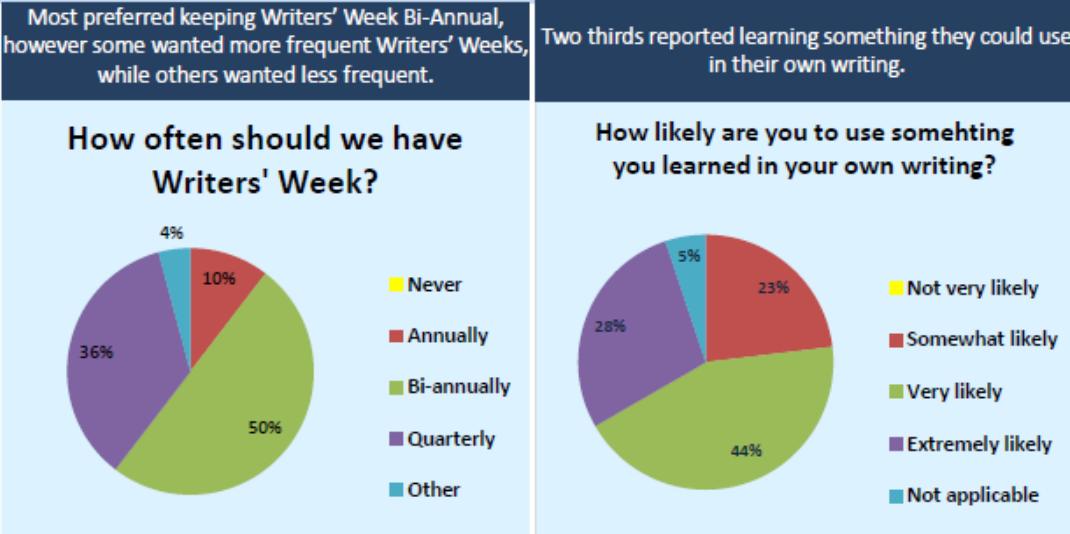
Survey respondents (n=48 [24 staff, 24 investigators], 39/48 reported participating); * % of participating respondent



How were meetings affected?**	
72% attended a writing focused meeting	• Good balance between "formal" events & open writing days
21% personally cancelled meetings	• "...thought the conversation during the breakfast was excellent, which was quite gratifying..."
33% previously scheduled meetings cancelled by others	• Positive feedback on the Research Conference Mock SMRB. Many found that they learned the most from this event, "Particularly Dan Berlowitz's overview of SMRB" as well as compliments to the "actors." • Endorsement of "Happy Hour" & interest in more "social" activities.

CHOIR Writers' Week Feedback

January 14th-18th 2019



Supporting a Culture of Writing

Writers' Week was largely endorsed as a meaningful contribution to CHOIR's Culture of Writing.

- "It's important to show that we as a group value writing and acknowledge how difficult it is to carve out time for [writing]."
- "I absolutely felt that it was okay to take a step back from day to day tasks to think, truly think! This is very rare I believe and you should be proud to have cultivated this culture here."
- "I loved learning from more seasoned researchers. Especially hearing about the paths people can take to find their niche."
- "...it was also just helpful and encouraging to hear others' experiences and challenges with writing."
- "Invaluable" to learn about strategies to make time for writing other than during Writers' Week.
- While some stated it was, "Great to have ELT & senior investigator support" others noted they would like better buy-in from investigators including support setting time aside for staff to write.
- Others wanted greater endorsement of meeting cancellations across the center.

Suggestion for Future Writers' Weeks

- A Friday afternoon "warmup" the week before to clear your inbox and desk, and to block off time to write during Writers' Week itself.
 - Further discussion of what happens before writing even begins (i.e. formulating ideas, approaching a piece of writing, etc.).
 - Organize small groups to set goals, support one another, and check-in throughout the week "...in the spirit of support, not pressure."
 - A session on different types of grant mechanisms.
 - Include events that engage staff &/or junior faculty.
- Please contact: Gemmae.Fix@va.gov with suggestions &/or to help plan future Writers' Weeks.
- 100% of respondents said they would be interested in participating in future Writers' Week**

CSIIIP Writers' Week Evaluation

- Main effect on meetings: attended meeting focused on writing
- Main accomplishments: spent time on writing, worked on a paper
- Daily updates and quotes were useful
- 100% would participate again
- Frequency? Quarterly or biannually
- Make it Center-wide

"Overall, I think that this serves a much bigger purpose than writing. When morale in the building is up, I think productivity will be up! It makes a difference when you feel valued as a member of a team!"- CeMHOR Writers' Month Participant

"...the best part about WW is the peer pressure/holding each other accountable for our writing goals. I need strong encouragement to 'drop everything and write'"- CHOIR Writers' Week Participant

"It was really nice to see people supporting each other and working towards the common goals of completing papers."- CSHIIP Writers' Week Participant

Promoting a Culture of Writing

"I love Writers' Week because it gives a feeling that all of CHOIR is writing." - CHOIR Writers' Week Participant

Poll

What resources do you need?

- More details on how to start & run a writing community
- Someone to write with
- Strategies to increase productivity
- Information on how to structure a paper
- Training on other forms of writing (i.e., non-academic papers)

- Writing Community: many models based on size, capacity & local context
- Three Centers, Six Models
 1. CHOIR Writers' Group
 2. CHOIR Writers' Week
 3. CeMHOR Writing Buddies
 4. CeMHOR Scientific Writers' Month
 5. CSHIIP Writers' Week: A Pilot
 6. CSHIIP Roundtable Writing Review

Conclusions



**Join us for the next
Writers' Week!
February 3-7, 2020**

Next Steps

- Start a group; ask a colleague to join you
- Block your calendar
- Plan & promote
- Set goals
- Share your success

Resources: Books & Articles

- Audisio et al (2009) "Successful publishing: How to get your paper accepted." *Surgical Oncology-Oxford*
- Besnier & Morales (2018) "Tell the Story." *American Ethnologist*
- Greenhalgh T (2019) "Twitter Women's Tips on Academic Writing: A Female Response to Gioia's Rules of the Game." *Journal of Management Inquiry*
- Martín E (2014) "How to write a good article." *Current Sociology*
- Patriotta G (2017) "Crafting Papers for Publication: Novelty and Convention in Academic Writing." *Journal of Management Studies*
- Pratt M (2009) "From the Editors: For the Lack of a Boilerplate: Tips on Writing up (And Reviewing) Qualitative Research." *The Academy of Management Journal*
- Ryan et al (2018) How to Conduct Writing Sprints
- Sword H (2016) “‘Write every day!’: a mantra dismantled.” *International Journal for Academic Development*
- Welch HG (1999) "Preparing manuscripts for submission to medical journals: the paper trail." *Eff Clin Prac*

Resources: Cyber Seminars

<https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/cyberseminars/catalog-archive.cfm>

Date	Title	Series	Presenters
10/21/2019	<u>Advertising Your Work: Infographics and Visual Abstracts</u>	Communication Strategies for Health Services Researchers	Connelly, Brigid Gilmartin, Heather
12/17/2018	<u>Using Social Media Effectively</u>	Communication Strategies for Health Services Researchers	Engle, Ryann Fix, Gemmae Trivedi, Ranak
11/19/2018	<u>Writing for a Lay Audience</u>	Communication Strategies for Health Services Researchers	Frakt, Austin Humphreys, Keith
10/15/2018	<u>Dissemination Strategies for Health Services Researchers</u>	Communication Strategies for Health Services Researchers	Elwy, Rani
9/17/2018	<u>Identifying Your Audience and Tailoring Your Outreach</u>	Communication Strategies for Health Services Researchers	Clark, Carson Connor
7/16/2018	<u>Utilizing Stakeholders as Communication Partners</u>	Communication Strategies for Health Services Researchers	Elwy, Rani
6/18/2018	<u>Research Communications Introduction and Overview</u>	Communication Strategies for Health Services Researchers	Clark, Carson Connor

Resources: Upcoming Cyber Seminars

Christine Hartmann, PhD

3-part HSR&D Cyberseminar series

1. “Grant Writing, session 1: How and what to cut: A primer on editing your own work”; Mon, Jan 27, 2020 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM EST
1. “Grant Writing, session 2: Tips from experts on how (and how not) to write”; Mon, Feb 24, 2020 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM EST
2. “Grant Writing, session 3: How to organize your writing for maximum impact”; Mon, Mar 23, 2020 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM EST

Thank you!



 Gemmae.Fix@va.gov

 [@GemmaeFix](https://twitter.com/GemmaeFix)



 Traci.Abraham@va.gov



 Alison.Hamilton@va.gov

 [@alisonh3](https://twitter.com/alisonh3)