

Improving Access to Member Services Task Force Phase 1 Recommendation Report

Date: September 23, 2019
To: Editors' Association of Canada National Executive Committee
From: Improving Access to Member Services Task Force
Subject: Phase 1 Report and Recommended Next Steps

Task Force Charge

1. To determine how to better meet the needs of members who cannot easily access benefits and services.
2. To provide at least one new benefit or service to these members. The new service must be revenue neutral.

Overview of Task Force Work Plan:

Principally by email, the Task Force has completed the following:

- Discussions of the Task Force Charge
- Research of what other organizations are doing
- Development of survey questions and wording to cover the Task Force Charge questions
- Creation of survey using SurveyMonkey; the survey was sent to NEC for review and approval before distribution to members (July 2018 distribution)
- Sharing of survey results
- Discussion of survey results and recommendations to NEC
- Phase 1 Recommendation Report created

Summary of Task Force Findings:

Research of Other Organizations

Our research found that other editing organizations (ACES, SfEP, IPEd) do the following to improve access for remote members/members who have trouble accessing services: local groups (similar to our twigs), online forums, regional mini-conferences, Skype Club, discounted memberships for hardship, discounted workshops for members living 200 km from meeting site, and video streaming of meetings and seminars. Some of these we already do (e.g., online forums), some are likely not feasible (e.g., mini-conferences), and some we can look into (e.g., streaming more meetings). Of note, it was as a result of this research that the NEC implemented a membership fee relief policy in the event of catastrophic illness or permanent disability.

Survey Results

The survey was sent to members in July of 2018. There were 101 respondents to our survey (90 English, 11 French). Of those, 61 respondents accessed webinars, while only 38 attended in-person seminars or workshops (in the past three years). More than half are at least somewhat satisfied with their access to services. Survey questions addressed specific examples of obstacles to access to member services as follows: geographic distance or travel issues, disability issues, childcare issues, cost of membership, and technological challenges. Most answers focused on one or more of the following topics: virtual access and/or email and online communication; in-person and/or location-specific situations; financial considerations. A few participants suggested variations of ways to bring costs down for membership, directory listings and mentorship. As has been already raised by the student affiliate committee, lower fees for courses and webinars for student members were mentioned. More twigs in rural or smaller communities was brought up as well. Another suggestion was made that EC reach out specifically to freelancers who work remotely. Participants expressed a desire for improved information sharing through the job board, ODE, on the website and through streaming.

Sample survey responses:

“The website is not mobile-friendly.”

“Could speaker events at Branch meetings be streamed?”

“...more in-person events in lesser populated areas” would be nice.

“Seriously considering not renewing my membership is the only benefit and in reality, it costs \$400. I can take four PD events as a non-member with that money.”

Obstacles mentioned under “other” include poor communication from Editors Canada head office/branch or twig, lack of time, lack of support for networking.

Sample survey responses under “other”:

“Staff do not respond to emails”

“Branch meetings “held downtown at night and I am not comfortable being in the downtown core then.”

“I’m wondering if there is interest in holding more informal meet-ups to discuss editing issues over coffee, especially on the weekends. Might help with networking.”

“More welcoming...encourage networking. There are no name tags, no idea who is who.”

Preliminary Findings

Generally, the remote members who indicated they did not have problems accessing member services are computer savvy and have no problems travelling to meetings. Those who did indicate problems cited remote location, cost, challenges with the website and taking webinars. Other difficulties mentioned were disability issues, francophones looking for more content, and breakdowns in communication with Editors Canada.

Task Force Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Look into the development of a virtual twig and support the development of more twigs where there is sufficient interest.

Recommendation 2: Make certification more accessible with the use of proctors.

Recommendation 3: Offer refunds to members who were unable to attend an event (conference, webinar) they signed up for due to reasons of remoteness/accessibility/health.

Recommendation 4: Communicate to members that 1) website updates and improvements are ongoing, 2) ODE listings are now random instead of alphabetical and 3) efforts are being taken to improve content and services in French.

Recommendation 5: Communicate to members the reasons for not being able to follow up on certain suggestions (e.g., including ODE in membership).

Recommendation 6: Facilitate and empower branches and twigs to follow up on applicable suggestions (e.g., providing name tags at meetings and setting meeting times).

Action to Be Taken: The Task Force asks the NEC to adopt the above recommendations.

List of the Task Force Members:

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This report, which outlines recommendations for next steps, concludes the Phase 1 work of the Improving Access to Member Services Task Force. The task force is moving to Phase 2, which includes writing a proposal for developing a virtual twig.