

May 2017

1. INTRODUCTION: WHY A STRATEGIC PLAN?

For RWNZ to thrive and continue to deliver what our members need and want, we need to make sure we are constantly reviewing and improving what we do and how we do it.

As RWNZ is entirely volunteer run, it makes sense to capture our ideas and actions in a written plan that can be picked up and added to by subsequent Executives. It gives a strong foundation to build on, which we can adapt as our world inevitably changes.

This plan looks at all the key aspects of RWNZ: how it's governed, how our volunteer system works, how we look after our existing members, and how we attract new members.

We encourage all members to take an interest in how your organisation works – and contribute your ideas and suggestions, and if and when you can, your time and effort. RWNZ is a relatively small boat and we depend on everyone pulling together to stay afloat.

So please read this plan – and if you have ideas to put into the mix, email us. We appreciate your interest and your time.

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2. CORNERSTONES OF RWNZ

The cornerstones of RWNZ are:

- 1. Our Members
- 2. Our Mission and Purpose
- 3. Our Rules*

These must be what we refer back to every time the Executive considers a new initiative, or a change to how RWNZ is governed. Every Executive needs to ask:

- Does this help us fulfil our Mission/Purpose?
- Is it within the RWNZ Rules?
- Most importantly, is it in the best interests of our members?

We must stay tuned in to Members' needs: Any member-based organisation should regularly review its Mission/Purpose and its Rules to ensure they are still meeting the needs of its members. Which means RWNZ needs to stay tuned in to what our members want and need – via regular surveys and active feedback loops, such as our Members-Only Facebook page.

***Our Rules** can be amended – any member can propose changes via remits at the AGM, and members can vote on them to become special resolutions, which are added into the Rules. Because of this, it is important that all members, not just the Executive, are familiar with the RWNZ Rules, so voting decisions are well informed.

Mission and Purpose of RWNZ: We are dedicated to promoting excellence in romance writing and the romance genre, and helping writers become published and establish careers by providing networking, support, information and resources. The RWNZ Rules state that our Aims are to: Promote excellence in writing. Support members to become published authors and establish careers in romance writing. Promote excellence in the genre of romantic fiction. Promote mutual support and networking opportunities among members. Promote a positive and professional image of romance authors and their works. Provide and facilitate education for members.

3. SWOT ANALYSIS OF RWNZ

Strengths	Weaknesses
 Engaged and active membership Long-standing loyal members High profile members Members successfully progressing their writing careers Members supportive of each other and willing to share experience and knowledge RWNZ has a good reputation, seen as at vanguard of international publishing/marketing trends Romance remains most popular genre worldwide by far 	 Run by volunteers: issues with time to do jobs/number of volunteers available/workload too heavy and not evenly shared/variable skill level on Executive Governance systems and processes not robust, not always followed Revenue base is small: limits provision of services/products to members Low member engagement in Executive elections Lack of resources to keep website up to date. Not be providing value to all members equally, i.e. at different career stages
Opportunities	Threats
 Increased profile of NZ romance writers, here and overseas Growth in self-publishing, and online author marketing New website: more attractive, more efficient, better capture and use of data, channel for providing new services to members (e.g. webinars) 	 Lack of volunteers Lack of support for volunteers from other members Significant drop in revenue Unwise use of revenue, e.g. depleting cash reserves Unskilled governance Other local or international romance/writing associations (and events) offer more perceived value Online networks offering everything that RWNZ does except conference

4. AREAS OF FOCUS

1. Governance: how RWNZ is run

RWNZ is a volunteer-run incorporated society. We depend on volunteers to take on a number of roles, including positions on the Executive.

RWNZ is not a hierarchical organisation. All RWNZ volunteers and members are of equal status. The Executive are different only in that, as elected officers of an incorporated society, they are responsible for ensuring that RWNZ meets its legal and financial obligations (e.g. health and safety, tax). The Executive is also responsible for ensuring that members' fees are used wisely, and that all activity undertaken by them and all other volunteers is in the best interests of all members.

The Executive roles are: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Secretary, and Publicity Officer. Key volunteer roles include: Contest Co-ordinator, Contest Managers, Conference Committee (various roles), *Heart to Heart* team, Web Mistress.

The Executive is elected annually for one term by member vote. If no competing nominations are received or objections raised, those nominated are appointed. The departing Executive hands over to the new Executive at the AGM.

The Executive is expected to hold monthly meetings, which are chaired by the President and minuted by the Secretary. Any member can request a copy of the minutes.

All members are invited to attend the AGM, which is usually held during Conference. The minutes of the AGM are circulated to all members.

Financially, RWNZ has limited resources:

- Our membership base gives us an annual income of around \$15-\$17,000.
- We can make additional income from Conference, but only, of course, if it runs at a profit, which it hasn't always. Any profit made by a conference is taxable.
- Due primarily to savings from our *Heart to Heart* magazine being provided digitally instead of in print form, RWNZ has amassed a cash reserve of around \$70,000. We cannot count on having this level of reserve forever, as we will have projects (e.g. website upgrades) that will require us to dip into it.
- RWNZ should also maintain a significant level of reserves to protect against any tax liability, conference loss, capital expenditure needed i.e. website This executive is proposing \$35,000 be held in reserve at all times.
- When we lost our charitable status in 2012, we became liable for tax but did not file returns as we should have, so we now owe back taxes and may possibly also owe late filing and interest penalties. From now on, we will need to budget for our tax obligations.
- We depend on our members volunteering their time, effort and skill—in short, RWNZ cannot exist without them.

Why good governance is important

Good governance ensures RWNZ is run in accordance with the Incorporated Societies Act 1908. This means RWNZ complies with the laws of New Zealand, does not undertake criminal activities, meets any and all tax obligations and complies with any government agency requirements that may apply to our activities. It also:

Ensures members' finances are wisely spent—and protects them from misuse.

Ensures openness and transparency between the Executive and members—so members can be confident that RWNZ is acting in their best interests.

Ensures members feel they have a say in how RWNZ is run.

Ensures institutional knowledge is passed on.

Ensures members' volunteer time and effort is used productively, and not wasted.

What we could improve on:

Ensure the elected Executive members have the information, knowledge and skill sets to perform their roles:

- Encourage members with suitable experience to stand.
- Encourage at least two nominations for each role, so members are encouraged to engage in the voting process.
- Encourage members to think carefully about who they're voting for by providing adequate information
- Provide copy of the RWNZ Rules, previously accepted remits, full role descriptions, how-to guides and a thorough briefing at handover.

Ensure seamless handover between Executives:

- Create standard handover checklist.
- Provide detailed position descriptions for each Executive Role
- Set aside time at Conference or soon after to go through everything with departing Executive (roles, meetings, key dates, volunteer management, etc).
- Ensure new Executive has access to all files/documents through a designated RWNZ filing server i.e. Dropbox.
- Departing Executive should be available for 4-6 weeks after handover for questions.

Ensure the Executive functions as a team, and puts members' best interests first.

- Set expectations at handover for how roles are performed, particularly that of President (who is there to steer not star).
- Provide format for running meetings, examples of good minutes, etc.

Actively promote member engagement with the Executive elections:

- Ensure any member feels free to stand for a position on the Executive. We need to encourage more members to stand—make the workload of the roles manageable, and eliminate any sense that the Executive is a clique of long-standing existing members.
- Encourage members to stand for the Executive for more than 1 year.

• Encourage voting—and questioning/scrutiny of the nominees. Ensure members are familiar with the RWNZ Rules. Regular communication, clear deadlines, make voting process easy.

Financial management: Policies around prudent use of funds:

- Every Executive should start planning their year's activities with a zero-sum budget (i.e. assume our annual income will be membership fees only)
- The cash reserves need to be protected, as we could burn through them rapidly ideally, they should only be used only for special projects, e.g. the website upgrade. Remit that Executive needs a vote from members if intending to use more than 5% of the cash reserve.
- A remit that says that the Executive must keep at least \$35,000 in reserves at all times.
- There should be an expectation of no 'perks' for members taking on Executive and other key volunteer roles, eg free Conference registration. All reasonable expenses incurred will be refunded, but there should be no added financial incentive to take on volunteer/Executive roles, as this damages the volunteer-run model
- The Conference should be carefully planned and budgeted to break-even or make a profit. Note that a remit was passed in 2016 that the Conference P+L will be circulated to members the February following Conference.
- We need consistency and clarity around claiming for expenses.
- To ensure we meet all our tax obligations, we should seek professional advice and/or help unless we have a qualified chartered accountant as treasurer.
- Policies should be proposed as remits at the AGM, so (if passed) they can become special resolutions and incorporated into the Rules. Otherwise there is no obligation for the Executive to follow them.

Streamline administration/paperwork:

- Filing protocols. Consistent naming of files. Mandatory storage in secure facility/no files (particularly financial ones) to be held on Executive members' personal computers. All access to files given to new Executive at handover.
- Using Dropbox Business for RWNZ filing
- Continued use of Xero. How-to guide for incoming Treasurer.
- Calendar of key events for each role provided at handover, eg tax deadlines for Treasurer, AGM timeline for Secretary, key events for the Publicity Officer, website updates for Web Mistress.

Volunteer management: (see also Existing Members, below)

- How-to guides for all volunteer roles.
- How-to Conference manual.
- Review positions annually to ensure workload sensible.
- Ensure protection and support with a Code of Conduct for dispute resolution and communication.
- Constantly recruit volunteers from membership base rather than waiting until they are needed.
- Set expectations about relationship with Executive from start.

2. Existing members: retention

RWNZ has an annual membership base of around 291 (as at May 2017), a number that has been pretty constant for the last few years.

Of those, around 160 are actively engaged with the organisation, through taking on volunteer roles to sharing information and experiences, and providing support, on our Member-only forums (Facebook, the Yahoo email loop).

Some statistics about our members:

- 89% identify as female
- 5% as male
- 6% gave no gender information
- Around 25 members are from outside NZ
- Around 94% are un-agented
- 43% identify as unpublished
- 24% as self-published only
- 18% as traditionally published only
- 16% as hybrid

We have many high profile, successful members, including some who founded RWNZ in September 1990.

We aim to promote all our members' successes, new releases, awards, etc, on our main RWNZ Facebook page, in *Heart to Heart*, and on the new website.

The RWNZ Publicity Officer is tasked with promoting to the general media, i.e. newspapers, any member who has hit NY Times or USA Today or reach some other milestone.

We ran a member survey in September 2016.

Why it's important to prioritise existing members

Our existing members, particularly our strong core of actively engaged members, are the bedrock of RWNZ.

- They are loyal to us, and we need to repay their loyalty by providing the best value for their membership that we can.
- They are our main source of revenue, year on year.
- They are our main source of volunteers for all our roles—and without volunteers RWNZ could not exist. We would have no Executive, no Conference, no website, no local and Chapter meetings, and no *Heart to Heart.*
- They are our best advocates. Personal advocacy, i.e. encouraging interested friends, family and fans to join RWNZ, is the most effective marketing tool available.
- They are our success stories. Many of our authors have joined RWNZ as novice unpublished writers, and have gone on to become international bestsellers. The journeys of our successful authors show potential members what they, too, can achieve—another great way to encourage new people to join RWNZ.

What we could improve on

Ensure we provide value for members at all stages of their writing career: Beginner/Unpublished/Newly Published/Professional:

- Understand what's important to members at each stage, e.g. via formal and informal surveys, capturing data on membership form. The member survey that went out in September 2016 provided lots of useful information about what our members want and need. This should be repeated every 2 years.
- Ensure Conference programme has workshops, activities, etc. for all stages.
- Review Contests to ensure they're still useful and appealing to members (noting that Contests are generally of most value to members who are starting out on their careers).
- Continue to gather feedback on new website resources to ensure they will remain useful to members.
- Ensure any new editors of *Heart to Heart* continue to include articles of value to different stages in each issue—provide 'how-to' guide.

Ensure new members stay because they feel welcome and included:

- At Chapter/Local groups:
 - Remind prospective members that they can go to one Chapter/Local group to see what it's about before signing up with the RWNZ.
 - Each month, supply Chapter/Local group co-ordinators with lists of new members in their area, for them to welcome and invite to the next meeting. Provide email templates if required.
 - Create Chapter/Local group profiles so that people know the make-up of each group and what they offer, to encourage members to attend their first group.
- At Conference:
 - Identify new/prospective members at Conference (e.g. stickers on lanyards), and assign existing members to welcome them, introduce them to other members and touch base with them throughout Conference, particularly at events like the Cocktail Party and Awards Dinner.
 - Formally welcome new/prospective members at opening of Conference.
- Communicating with RWNZ:
 - Encourage new members to contribute to our Members-only forums, and to send us their success stories for the website, main RWNZ Facebook page, for publicity purposes.

Promote our members' successes more widely – in media (national and local newspapers, magazines, national and local radio, TV), and on social media.

Build connections with libraries and booksellers: Encourage them to stock members' books. (Having 50 copies of a book in libraries entitles members to share in the Public Lending Right.)

Ensure volunteer workload is manageable, and volunteers have support and protection:

- Provide 'how-to' guides for key volunteer roles, such as the Executive and those involved in Conference (and also other key roles, e.g. Web Mistress).
- Provide 'how-to' guide for organising and running Conference.
- Ensure members understand the responsibilities and scope of all volunteer roles, including the Executive.

- Ensure all volunteers, including the Executive, are protected and supported with a Code of Conduct for communication and dispute resolution that members are expected to adhere to.
- Make regular call-outs for volunteers to build up a pool of names and skillsets, rather than waiting until volunteers are needed.

3. New members: growth

RWNZ membership remains reasonably steady – growth in new members generally balances out any members who resign.

Our main tools for attracting new members are:

- Our website
- Our main RWNZ Facebook page
- Conference
- Other events, such as seminars and workshops that are open to nonmembers.

We can also assume new members join because of advocacy from existing members, but this is something we do not measure.

We face some challenges in publicising RWNZ more widely:

- Time for volunteers taking on publicity role/s—preparing media releases and liaising with media can be a very time-consuming job
- Lack of data about members' successes (awards, best-seller lists, etc.). The new membership form captures more data, but only if members complete it! We rely on members to tell us about their successes.

Why it's important to recruit new members

Our membership base is skewed older (50+), and a number of our members have been with us a long time (some since RWNZ was founded in 1990). It is wonderful to have this loyalty but with such a small overall membership, we need to find new members to replace those members who will inevitably leave.

The revenue we currently gather from members is small, and if we did not have willing volunteers every year, RWNZ could not afford to provide the services it does. A larger membership base provides more revenue, which gives us more ability to provide more services and value to members.

If RWNZ has a larger membership base, then it has a bigger pool of advocates – and of members who can raise RWNZ's profile though their own successes and activities. The NZ Society of Authors has around 1400 members and this gives them the ability to lobby for their members and provide opportunities such as grants and mentorships. More members mean RWNZ can have greater influence and greater presence.

That said, we can't lose sight of the fact the RWNZ was established for romance writers, and so our membership should not extend so wide that we become under pressure to divert from our Mission and Purpose.

What we could improve on

Promote our members' successes more widely—in media (national and local newspapers, magazines, national and local radio, TV), and on social media.

Enlist support for the Publicity and Website Officer. Break the role into two and create a Website Manager. Ask for help from members when publicity opportunities present themselves (e.g. Conference).

Encourage members to actively advocate for RWNZ and encourage people to join. We should ask all our high profile members to 'plug' RWNZ wherever and whenever it's appropriate. Perhaps incentivise members to encourage interested friends and family to join—'friend get friend'?

Build connections with libraries and booksellers: Consider allowing libraries to have cheaper Associate Memberships. Encourage libraries to stock members' books

Follow up all non-member Conference attendees, and non-member Contest entries and encourage them to join.

Follow-up resigning members, so that we better understand their reasons for leaving RWNZ.

5. SUMMARY OF INITIATIVES

Focus Area	Aim	Initiatives	Who	Timing
Governance:	A1. Ensure Executive has appropriate information, knowledge and skill.	i. Full role descriptions, and 'How to' guides	Executive to create for handover	By August 2017
A: Executive capability	A2. Encourage members with right skills to stand	 i. Ensure nomination process is well communicated, with plenty of time for members considering standing to ask questions ii. Actively promote member engagement iii. Encourage members to stand for executive for more than 1 year 	Executive – via communication channels	June-August 2017
	A3. Encourage members to think carefully about who they're voting for	 i. Ensure nomination process is well communicated ii. Actively encourage participation 	Executive – via communication channels	June-August 2017
	A4. Handover between Executives is seamless	 i. Create standard handover checklist ii. Book time for handover at Conference iii. Ensure new Executive has full access to RWNZ filing system (Dropbox), Xero and website 	Executive	August – mid/end September

Focus Area	Aim	Initiatives	Who	Timing
		iv. Departing Executive to be available for 4-6 wks after handover for Qs		
	A5. Ensure Executive functions as a team, working in best interests of RWNZ	i. Set expectations for roles at handover	Executive	By August 2017
		ii. Provide format for running meetings, taking minutes, etc		
Governance:	B1: Ensure members finances are spent wisely	i. Executive should start every financial year with a zero sum budget	Executive to supply example for handover	By August 2017
B: Financial Management		 ii. Cash reserves used only for special projects – remit that members must vote on any spend of reserves over 5% 	Executive to draft	For 2017 Conference
		iii. Remit to ensure cash reserves of at least \$35K maintained	Executive to draft	For 2017 Conference
		iv. Policy to give consistency and clarity around expenses	Executive to draft	For 2017 Conference
		v. Policy to give consistency and clarity around expenses	Executive to draft	For 2017 Conference
	B2. Ensure RWNZ meets its tax obligations	i. Policy that RWNZ should seek professional advice at tax time unless the Treasurer is a Chartered Accountant	Executive to draft	For 2017 Conference

Focus Area	Aim	Initiatives	Who	Timing
		ii. Annual budget to include allowance for tax	Executive (in budget example)	For 2017 Conference
	B3: Plan for Conference to make a profit	i. Budget to be carefully developed and checked	Conference Committee, with Executive oversight	Every Conference
	B4: Budget transparency for members	i. Accounts to be available on request	Executive (Treasurer)	Every year
		ii. Conference to have a separate P+L, circulated to members Feb following	Conference Committee/Executive	
	B5: Improve RWNZ's tax status	Look at revising Constitution for re- applying for Charities Commission	Executive	2017/2018
	B6: Look for other sources of income	i. Develop Sponsorship and Grants Process – for RWNZ and individual members	Executive	2017/2018
		ii. Apply to Arts Council for funding to fund our Webinar Programme	Executive	
		iii. Look for more sponsors for Conference	Executive/Conference Committee	
Governance:	C1: Consistent filing protocols	i. Consistent naming of files.	Executive to draft examples	By August 2017
C: Streamline Admin and Paperwork		ii. Mandatory storage in secure facility (Dropbox Business) – no files (particularly financial ones) to be held on Executive members' personal computers.	Executive to draft remit for policy	By August 2017

Focus Area	Aim	Initiatives	Who	Timing
		iii. Mandatory use of Xero for continuity	Executive to draft remit for policy	By August 2017
		iv. File access at handover	Executive	Every Conference
	C2: Executive informed of all obligations	Calendar of key events for each role provided at handover, eg tax deadlines for Treasurer, AGM timeline for Secretary, website updates for Publicity and Website Officer.	Executive to draft	By August 2017
Governance				
D: Volunteer Management	D1: Ensure workload is manageable to encourage members to volunteer	i. How-to guides for all volunteer roles, including Conference Committee, H2H Editor, Web Mistress, etc	Executive to draft	By August 2017
		ii. How-to Conference manual.	Executive to draft	By August 2017
		iii. Review positions annually to ensure workload sensible.	Executive	Every year
		iv. Constantly recruit volunteers from membership base rather than waiting until they are needed.	Executive	Ongoing
		v. Set expectations about relationship with Executive from start.	Executive	Whenever volunteers come on board

Focus Area	Aim	Initiatives	Who	Timing
	D2: Ensure volunteers are supported and protected	Draft a Code of Conduct – guidelines for constructive communication and dispute resolution.	Executive to propose remit for 2017 AGM	2017 AGM
Existing Members: Retention	1. Ensure we provide value for members at all stages of their writing career: Beginner, Un- published, Published, Professional	i. Understand what's important to members at each stage, e.g. via formal and informal surveys, capturing data on membership form. Repeat formal survey every two years.	Executive	Ongoing
		ii. Ensure Conference programme has workshops, activities, etc. for all stages.	Executive, Conference Committee	Conference planning
		iii. Review Contests to ensure they're still useful and appealing to members	Executive	Annually
		iv. Continue to gather feedback on new website resources to ensure they will remain useful to members.	Executive	Ongoing
		v. Ensure any new editors of <i>Heart to</i> <i>Heart</i> continue to include articles of value to different stages in each issue.	Executive, H2H Editor	Ongoing

Focus Area	Aim	Initiatives	Who	Timing
	2. Ensure new members feel welcome and included	<i>i. At Chapter/Local groups:</i> Remind prospective members that they can go to one Chapter, Local group to see what it's about before signing up with the RWNZ.	Membership Secretary: Welcome Pack and email	When member joins
		Each month, supply Chapter/Local group co-ordinators with lists of new members in their area, for them to welcome and invite to the next meeting. Provide example emails if required.	Membership Secretary	Process in place by Aug 2017 Execution Monthly
		Create Chapter/Local group profiles so that people know the make-up of each group and what they offer, to encourage members to attend their first group.	Chapter/Local group co- ordinators	Phase 2 of website: TBC
		 <i>ii. At Conference:</i> Identify new, prospective members at Conference (e.g. stickers on lanyards Assign existing members to welcome them, introduce them to other members and touch base with them throughout Conference. Formally welcome new/prospective 	Executive, Conference Committee to include in Conference Plan	Conference
		members at opening.		

Focus Area	Aim	Initiatives	Who	Timing
		<i>iii. Communicating with RWNZ:</i> Encourage new members to contribute to our Members-only forums, and to send us their success stories for the website, main RWNZ Facebook page, for publicity purposes.	Executive	Ongoing
	2. Promote Member successes widely	Publicity plan – national, local media, social media	Publicity Officer to develop	Review annually Execution ongoing
	3. Build connections with libraries, booksellers	i. Create email list of libraries and independent booksellers	Executive/Publicity Officer	Ongoing
		ii. Communicate all member new releases, encourage libraries and bookshops to stock	Executive/Publicity Officer	Ongoing
		iii. Consider allowing libraries to have cheaper Associate Memberships.	Executive/Publicity Officer	2017/2018
	4. Ensure volunteer workload is manageable	See above: Governance: D: Volunteer Management		
New Members: Growth	1. Raise profile of RWNZ	i. Build connections with media: become go-to spokespeople for romance media questions	Publicity Officer to develop Publicity plan	Review Annually
		ii. Promote our members' successes more widely.		Execution ongoing
		iii. Publicise Conference		

Focus Area	Aim	Initiatives	Who	Timing
	2. Build connections with libraries, booksellers	As above: Retention (3)		
	3. Enlist support for Publicity Officer	i. Create a Website Manager (Web Mistress).	Executive to advertise	Done
		ii. Recruit members to assist with publicity (e.g. Conference Sub-Committee).	Executive, Conference Committee	Conference planning
	4. Encourage members to advocate for RWNZ	i. Ask members to 'plug' RWNZ wherever and whenever it's appropriate.	Executive to communicate	Ongoing
		ii. Consider 'friend get friend' incentive	Executive	Planning for 2017/18
	5. Enlist non-members who participate in RWNZ	Follow up all non-member Conference attendees, and non-member Contest entries and encourage them to join.	Membership Secretary	Process in place by Aug 2017
				Execution Ongoing
	6. Understand why members leave to inform	Follow-up resigning members, so that we better understand their reasons for leaving	Membership Secretary	Process in place by August 2017
	future planning	RWNZ.		Execution Ongoing