

SENIOR DEVELOPMENT MANAGER POSITION DESCRIPTION 2025

Position title:	Senior Development Manager
Reports to:	Festival Director
Salary:	\$120,000–130,000 (pro-rated), plus statutory superannuation.
Employment basis:	Part-time (3 days per week / 0.6FTE), 2-year contract.
Employment Conditions:	A six-month probation period applies.
Location:	The position is located in The Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas at 176 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000.

Background

Melbourne Writers Festival brings writers and readers together to be inspired, challenged and thrilled by an excellent, creative and surprising program of events celebrating books and ideas.

Since 1986, we have entertained hundreds of thousands of readers as the flagship annual writers festival of our UNESCO City of Literature. MWF ignites conversations across Melbourne and inspires curiosity and connection.

Featuring internationally renowned and leading Australian writers and anchored by our First Nations curators, the Melbourne Writers Festival has a focus on contemporary literary fiction, along with non-fiction writers, thinkers, and commentators. Through the annual MWF Schools program, we support the next generation of young readers and writers.

MWF is a not-for-profit incorporated organisation funded by box office and other earned income; state, local, federal and international government funding; sponsorship, donations and fundraising.

Our Team

MWF's core year-round team is led by a Festival Director who reports to the Board, supported by a full-time General Manager, a full-time Head of Marketing and Partnerships, and the Senior Development Manager. The Board oversees the governance and strategic direction of MWF.

Experienced contract staff join the MWF team in the months leading up to the festival to oversee ticketing, production, front of house and volunteer management. Casual front of house and production staff and a team of committed volunteers support the Festival's delivery in May.

Role Summary

The Senior Development Manager is a new role created specifically to drive the next phase of MWF's growth. They lead the development and delivery of MWF's Fundraising Strategy. They are responsible for cultivating and managing relationships with a philanthropic portfolio of individual donors and trusts & foundations, securing funding and driving sustainable growth.

In addition, they work closely with the Festival Director to identify and secure major corporate sponsorship opportunities that deliver financial and strategic benefits, and ensure all grant and funding obligations are met.

Key responsibilities

Strategy and research

- Create and lead MWF's development strategy; identify and define MWF's assets and value propositions; research prospective donors, trusts & foundations and major sponsors; devise approaches to pitching and sponsor engagement
- Identify and grow the highest-potential relationships within MWF's suite of donors and sponsors
- Respond to sector trends and opportunities to grow MWF's capability in securing sponsorships

Fundraising

- Grow, deepen and manage a portfolio of excellent relationships with sponsors, donors, and philanthropic trusts through meetings, engaged communications, and timely reporting
- Devise and lead innovative new fundraising strategies, projects and initiatives to engage donors, grow MWF's engagement and impact, and increase income from major gifts, grants and donations
- Create and implement an MWF bequests program
- Proactively support the Festival Director to achieve MWF's annual development budget targets
- Deliver all activity in a manner that aligns with MWF's strategic priorities and artistic direction

Management and administration

- Roll out MWF's annual core donation appeal
- Prepare analysis of development data; drive and deliver annual stakeholder reporting; and deliver application and acquittal processes for grants where required
- Prepare regular reports for management, board meetings and stakeholders

- Support the Festival Director and Head of Marketing and Partnerships to develop, negotiate and execute partnership contracts
- Coordinate the delivery of all benefits and contractual obligations for the Festival, including invitations, ticketing and event plans for sponsors, partners and donors
- Support the Festival Director and General Manager with major applications, reports and acquittals to government and other funding bodies
- Maintain strong, accurate record-keeping and financial management
- Demonstrate integrity, transparency and accountability in all interactions with donors and stakeholders

General

- Actively contribute to upholding best practice cultural safety for all MWF staff, artists, volunteers, audiences and other stakeholders
- Engage fully in the Festival, which may include extended hours and additional duties during the Festival period
- Other responsibilities as required by the Festival Director

Selection criteria

1. Significant prior development experience in a not-for-profit context, including demonstrable experience in initiating and managing complex relationships with philanthropic donors, trusts & foundations, and/or corporate sponsors
2. A clear understanding of value alignment in an arts and culture context; and ability to work creatively and ethically to foster relationships and devise sponsorships that deliver tangible benefits
3. Strategic and opportunity-driven, with experience with developing and implementing fundraising strategies, and aligning these to a wider organisational strategic plan
4. Strong financial acumen and analytical skills including budget management, sponsorship negotiation, revenue generation and performance reporting
5. A proactive relationship builder, with experience in networking and negotiating, supported by excellent written and verbal communication skills
6. Resilient and target-focused, with demonstrated ability to manage the expectations of multiple stakeholders, prioritise tasks and bring excellent organisational skills to a fast-paced, dynamic festival environment

Desirable

1. Extensive fundraising networks in the arts and cultural sector or an aligned field
2. A deep understanding of and passion for the Australian arts and literature landscape, and for the work of Melbourne Writers Festival

Further information

Employment is subject to a six-month probation period.

Flexible work arrangements can be discussed. Time off in lieu applies for weekend Festival work.

Employees at Melbourne Writers Festival have access to an Employee Assistance Program.

All MWF staff are required to hold a current Working with Children Check.

Melbourne Writers Festival is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer.

MWF is committed to diversity and inclusion and aspires to be reflective of our broader community. We encourage applications from First Nations people, those who are culturally and linguistically diverse, the LGBTQIA+ community, and people with disability or who are D/deaf. MWF will consider flexible working options and reasonable adjustments for applicants with disability.

Application Process

Confidential enquiries about the role can be made to Veronica Sullivan, Festival Director, at veronica@mwf.com.au.

Interviews will take place in the week commencing Monday 22 September.

Closing date: 12pm AEST, Monday 15 September.

Applications must include the following 3 documents as a single PDF:

- A cover letter outlining your interest in the role.
- Responses to each of the key selection criteria that demonstrate your experience, with examples.
- A current resume, including three referees.

PLEASE NOTE: Referees will not be contacted without prior consultation.

Application Format:

- Please combine your application into a single PDF document, with the filename 'Last Name First Name – Senior Development Manager'.
- Applications should not exceed 6 pages in length.
- Applications should be addressed to Veronica Sullivan, Festival Director and submitted by email only to recruitment@mwf.com.au.
- Late applications will not be accepted.