

APPLICATION

for the 2026

Editor-Writer Mentorship

promoting voices from the margins

By The Word | A Storytelling Sanctuary

We invite aspiring writers from historically marginalized backgrounds to apply to be matched with an experienced editor. Editor-Mentors will provide feedback on a manuscript being prepared for submission to agents and editors for publication.

Program Overview

What is the Program? Aspiring writers from underrepresented groups (*see explanation below*) will be paired with an experienced editor who will provide substantive feedback to help raise a strong manuscript to its best position for submission to potential agents and editors. This is an opportunity to learn from the knowledge of experienced acquiring editors. This program is free of cost due to the generosity of our volunteer mentor-editors.

Mentor-Editors & Genres:

- Ariel Richardson, *Senior Editor at Chronicle Books*
 - Picture Book (fiction or nonfiction)
- Ivan Taurisano, *Associate Editor at First Second, Macmillan*
 - Middle Grade Fiction
- Foyinsi Adegbonmire, *Editor at Feiwel and Friends, Macmillan*
 - Young Adult Fiction
- Leah Mol, *Associate Editor at Park Row, HarperCollins*
 - Adult Fiction
- Jenny Xu, *Senior Editor at Atria, Simon & Schuster*
 - Adult Nonfiction
 - Please note that Jenny does not accept prescriptive non-fiction

Application Deadline: Applications will be accepted from Monday, February 16, 2026 (8:00 a.m. Denver/U.S. Mountain Daylight Time) to Monday, March 9, 2026 (11:59 p.m. Denver/US Mountain Daylight Time).

Eligibility: Aspiring or upcoming writers from underrepresented groups (*see definition below*) with a completed, unpublished manuscript* may apply. Applicants may apply in only one (1) category. The categories are picture book (fiction & nonfiction), middle-grade fiction, young adult fiction, adult fiction and adult non-fiction (as described in the Mentor-Editors section).

*Adult nonfiction applicants may apply with a completed proposal and sample pages.

Application Follow-up: All applicants will hear from The Word approx. late June 2026. Three (3) finalists in each category will be asked to submit full manuscripts prior to this time. Please check your email regularly and add mentorship@thewordfordiversity.org to your contacts to prevent our emails

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from going to your spam or junk folder. If selected as a finalist, you will have one (1) week to submit your full manuscript or full nonfiction proposal or forfeit your spot. Editor-Mentors will choose their mentees by May/June 2026.

Application Instructions

****Applications that do not follow these procedures and format requirements will be disqualified.**

How to Apply:

Applications for The Word's Editor-Writer Mentorship Program must be submitted via the online form found here:

<https://forms.gle/DjQe4h9ADbAx6BJU8>

- Attach the following submission in a single PDF:
 - Format requirements:
 - Submissions must be double-spaced with 1-inch margins*;
 - Submissions must be in Times New Roman**, 12-point font;
 - Submissions must be one (1) PDF document
 - (Search "free PDF converter" to find free programs to convert your documents into a single PDF)
 - (**If Times New Roman is unavailable, please indicate this at the top of your submission and use the closest equivalent font)
 - What to include in your Submission:

Submissions will include two parts: Short-Answer Question Responses and Manuscript Sample. Both parts must be combined into one (1) PDF document.

Part I: Short-Answer Questions

Answer each of the following questions:

1. Describe your writing career to date. Please note if you have previously published a completed book or novel-length work. (200 words or less)
2. What are your goals as a writer and what steps have you taken to grow to this point? (200 words or less)
3. How does being a writer from an underrepresented background impact your work and your writing career? (200 words or less)
4. Provide a brief pitch of your manuscript, including the title, genre, and total word count. (100 words or less)

Include the question, and then your answer in your document.

For applications to remain anonymous for readers and editors, there should be NO personal information (name, titles of published works, social media handles, address, phone number, etc.) included in any of the answers or on the manuscript sample.

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Part 2: Manuscript Sample

Submit the first ten (10) pages of your completed manuscript.

- Special instructions for the picture book submission:
 - For picture book submissions, submit the complete manuscript if it is 10 pages or less.
- Special instructions for the adult nonfiction submission:
 - For adult nonfiction submissions, if you do not have a completed manuscript submit the first 10 pages of the sample pages for your proposal. DO NOT include any other portion of your proposal. DO submit sample pages only.
- DO start your manuscript on a new page after the essay questions.
- DO NOT begin your manuscript sample on the same page as your essay questions.
- DO NOT include a title page—if you do it will count toward the 10-page limit.
- DO include the title of the manuscript at the very top of the first page of your sample 10 pages.
- DO remove your name and any personal identifying information from your manuscript. We want all submissions to be anonymous to our readers.
- DO NOT include any information in headers or footers (this includes the title, your name, and page numbers).
- DO NOT SUBMIT MORE THAN TEN (10) PAGES - even if it ends in the middle of a chapter and/or there are only one or two paragraphs on the next page. We are asking that everyone submits ONLY 10 pages of their manuscript. NO EXCEPTIONS!

Additional Explanations & Information

How do we focus our search for underrepresented voices? We promote the inclusive representation of experiences in literature, including a diversity of experiences based on:

racial, cultural, ethnic, or religious identity; gender identity; sexual orientation; physical, cognitive, or emotional disability; socioeconomic adversity; and personal experiences of adversity or injustice.

*We recognize that personal experiences of adversity occur in many forms and we believe that the impact of each must be respected. To guide the use of our resources, we focus on experiences that lack representation in literature, based on our best knowledge and research.

Additional Program Information: Mentors and mentees will determine their contact schedules and frequency based on the needs of both parties. All mentors and mentees will be provided guidelines and resources to help promote productive working relationships. *The mentorship relationship does not guarantee publication of any completed work and mentors are not*

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expected to provide any referrals to acquiring agents, editors, or others. The program's goal is to support the development of the mentee writer's work.

Mentors and mentees will have a minimum of two meetings over an approximately 6-9 month mentorship relationship. Feedback may be written or oral, as is determined by each volunteer editor-mentor. Additional meetings and feedback will be determined by each mentor/mentee pair, based on the volunteer editor's availability and the needs of the mentee.

Questions? Contact mentorship@thewordfordiversity.org

**We look forward to reading your submissions
and good luck to all!**

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