

Meet Shabnaj Chowdhury, EFA Membership Coordinator



Last summer, Shabnaj Chowdhury took a break to regroup. The stressful, persistent pandemic had prompted her, like so many other people, to reevaluate her priorities. Hunkering down with her parents and brother in Queens, New York, the journalist considered her options. Of course, she wanted to keep writing; it was her passion, and had led to her BA in English Literature from Hunter College and MA in Journalism from the City University of New York (CUNY). Shabnaj also wanted to take on a managerial role. She had enjoyed a foray into management during her time at the digital media company Dotdash while also freelancing for various publications. She took her time, searching for the right professional fit.

Enter the Editorial Freelancers Association.

Shabnaj knew she had found her match when she read the EFA's Membership Coordinator job description. "The EFA is such a great resource, helping freelancers hone their craft," she says. "Really, I just immediately believed in the organization. That's the number one reason I wanted to work for the EFA."

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EFA General Manager Susan Patton likewise knew that the EFA had found the right match in Shabnaj for the full-time position, which includes providing support to current and prospective members and helping maintain the EFA's online platforms and website. "Shabnaj's writing and administrative experience, along with her enthusiasm for the work of the EFA, made her an excellent fit," said Susan.

After starting her new job on December 1, Shabnaj began working closely with the outgoing membership staff person, Christina Shideler, as well as Susan and others. The job is complex (think "many, many hats"), but Shabnaj continues to receive training along the way, plus support from people like Membership chair Maria Alonzo.

"It has been a joy to work with Shabnaj on Membership," says Maria. "She has been a big help already. I value her great ideas and feel she's a vital part of the team."

Shabnaj originally worked in the EFA's New York City office two days per week and from home the other three. Since the Covid surge, she has worked from home full-time and looks forward to returning to her mixed schedule when safety permits.

During a typical day, Shabnaj reviews Job List submissions and sends listings to members; answers queries from potential and current members and clients via email and phone; helps manage the Discussion List; updates the EFA website; and assists Board chairs with various tasks. Two broad membership goals are increasing membership diversity and strengthening chapter development.

For now, Shabnaj continues to map out her various responsibilities and set priorities with the help of Susan and EFA Co-executive Christina Frey. "Susan and Christina have been great," says Shabnaj. "Really, everyone has been so welcoming, which has made my transition easier."

"Shabnaj is confident and well-organized, with a lot of great ideas," says Christina. "She's the perfect person to handle membership questions and concerns as we move forward."

Outside of her job, Shabnaj continues to write—and read, prolifically. She loves long-form narratives, creative

nonfiction, and memoir, and in her writing gravitates toward personal essays. She also enjoys reporting on community and health. Of course, one can't sit in front of a computer all day and night; Shabnaj clears her mind and stays in shape by weightlifting, jumping rope, and taking long walks. "I've felt so many benefits from exercising regularly," she says. "My goal is to not slack off!"

One does not get the feeling that Shabnaj ever slacks off about anything. The EFA's membership is fortunate to have this energetic new Membership Coordinator on board. To review the many EFA's member benefits, visit [the member benefits page](#) (you must be logged in to view it).



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