

Connecting Our Communities Through the Power of Film

A strategic plan for the Durham Region International Film Festival
2021 - 2024



DURHAM REGION



DRIFF



INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL



Introduction

The Durham Region International Film Festival (DRIFF) is a local, not-for-profit organization, dedicated to promoting arts, culture, and community from within Durham Region. Program offerings have included an annual film festival, monthly DRIFF in a Jiff shorts programs, DRIFF EDU and outdoor drive-in film screenings. DRIFF's board engaged Bespoke Collective in Spring of 2021, to embark upon a strategic planning process that would lead to a succinct vision, mission, and values, the identification of strategic priorities, as well as a three-year roadmap for implementation with success metrics. By revealing the statistical demographic changes in Durham Region, the plan also focuses on how to broaden audiences to better reflect our communities.

This document summarizes core components of DRIFF's strategic plan which will serve as a guidepost for the organization in years to come. This new path forward was guided by the aspirations

and wisdom of our community partners and stakeholders, filmmakers, board and staff, who were actively involved in the process through interviews, surveys and strategic visioning and planning sessions.

“ **Extremely** professionally run festival. Endless networking opportunities. Great people. You can tell they really care about growing the film community in Durham and it was an honour to screen a film with them this year!

Willie Frickelton, 2020 filmmaker



Vision, Mission & Values

DRIFF's intent, with its updated Vision, Mission, and Values, is to share with its diverse communities its excitement to continue to build on its strengths as an organization embedded in the Region of Durham. This commitment to community is reflected through its programming and the shared aspirations that guide DRIFF's work and ambitions.

Vision

DRIFF brings the film festival experience to diverse audiences in Durham Region and beyond, nurturing community connections, learning, and the development of local talent through a shared love of film.

Mission

DRIFF is a not-for-profit film festival rooted in the communities of Durham. In addition to growing our annual festival of local and international films, DRIFF will continue to expand educational opportunities to develop local creativity, storytelling, and experimentation through moving images. DRIFF will engage a diverse network of audiences, filmmakers, and collaborators to promote film as a form of creative expression and a catalyst for community building.

DRIFF Values

- The Power of Film
- Community Pride
- Collaboration
- Meaningful Stories
- Diversity in Our Communities
- Educational Experiences

Plan a Sustainable Financial Strategy

The development of a relevant local film festival, with all its rich community benefits, requires a balanced and sustainable funding plan.



GOALS

- Identify attainable revenue streams, financial targets, and assign resources.
- Build board and staff capacity to generate income.
- Develop sponsorship assets, prospect list, and monetization opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

- Determine with staff and board Finance, Governance, and Staffing committee the appropriate and achievable annual revenue formula for DRIFF, including earned revenues (ticketing strategy, membership model, etc.), government support/grants, and contributed income.
- **Develop a comprehensive multi-year fundraising plan for individuals, corporations, foundations, and major fundraising events.**
- Investigate COVID recovery staffing grants, mentorship, and internship funding.
- Grow DRIFF's support through relationships with local, provincial, and federal granting organizations. Develop retail/merchandise options and other earned revenue opportunities.
- Grow corporate support by engaging corporate-connected board members, leveraging new networks, and pursuing new models for marketing, partnerships, gift programs, and recognition.

Implement a New Organizational & Staffing Structure

Over the course of the next three years, DRIFF will create a new organizational structure, define staff roles, clarify board involvement and volunteer expectations. This will be done through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.



GOALS

- Strategically develop staff and board roles and responsibilities.
- Embed best practices to achieve equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) into HR policies and procedures.
- Recruit staff and board members to implement EDI best practices (if required).
- Create a safe and positive work environment and culture.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop three board committees to allow board members to leverage their specific skills and experience in the growth and development of DRIFF's strategic plan:
 - Programming, Education, and Partnerships
 - Finance, Governance, and Staffing
 - Audiences, Events, and Marketing
- Clarify organizational staff capacity and create a staff organizational chart.
- Create job descriptions, roles, governance, and reporting structure.
- Engage an Executive Director to prioritize strategic initiatives and guide their implementation.
- Engage local communities within Durham Region, including racialized and Indigenous communities, to build interest and trust in being part of DRIFF's organizational structure.
- **Conduct recruitment and outreach for board and staff, ensuring that a commitment to EDI and representation of local communities is reflected.**
- Develop the criteria and recruitment strategy for board candidates.

Prioritize Audience Growth & Marketing

DRIFF has firmly positioned its vision to be centred on creating community connections that not only bring the citizens of Durham Region together, but also attract a broader range of more diverse audiences and filmmakers.



GOALS

- Define audiences and put systems in place to track demographics.
- Identify core communications needs, messages, and assets.
- Cross-pollinate audiences through programming partnerships.
- Implement communications plan.

OBJECTIVES

- Create an Audiences, Events, and Marketing board committee.
- Review the demographic data and identify core audience types and audience gaps.
- Develop a communications strategy that includes assessing and redeveloping marketing assets to reflect the organization's values and aspirations.
- Develop a consistent tone of voice for key communication assets.
- **Build out and strengthen social media platforms.**
- Collect statistics and set targets for audience engagement (live events, digital traffic, media traction).
- Create a roadmap for ongoing development of owned and paid media.
- Work with like-minded programming partners on cross-promotion opportunities.
- Advertise through community-based partners, platforms, and publications.

“ **This festival** is such a huge part of the culture in Durham Region!

- Stephanie Herrera, *DRIFF audience member*

Create an Expansive Partnership Model

DRIFF's strength is in its varied and committed partnerships. These will be nurtured and broadened to enrich both the festival and our communities.

GOALS

- Deepen education partnerships with an emphasis on emerging filmmakers and audiences.
- Build ties with the local film and entertainment industry and emerging filmmakers.
- Identify and build relationships with cultural and community partners across the townships and cities with an emphasis on reflecting the diversity of Durham Region.
- Expand partnerships across multiple strategic priorities (fundraising, programming, communications, etc).

“ I couldn't have asked for a better experience for my first film festival. Just grab a ticket and see for yourself.

- Benjamin Hargreaves, 2020 filmmaker

OBJECTIVES

- Create a Programming, Education and Partnerships board committee.
- Through an equity, diversity and inclusion lens, map out existing and potential partnerships across areas such as financial, programming, venues, and communications for alignment, potential shared opportunities, and future strategic initiatives.
- Expand DRIFF in a Jiff cross-partnerships model.
- Deepen education partnerships, and connections with emerging filmmakers.
- Further establish strategic relationships and networks with local filmmakers, influencers, and the film and entertainment industry, ensuring relationships reflect the diversity of Durham Region.
- Develop strategic partnerships with neighbouring/like-minded film festivals to develop co-presentations, as well as share resources and audiences.
- Pursue in-kind partnerships and sponsorship opportunities across Durham Region to expand a 'region-wide' network.
- Reach out to community groups that support diverse populations and address gaps in audiences for new partnerships with programming, communications, and finances.
- Continue to be actively involved in several cities and towns within Durham Region. This includes building stronger relationships with community groups and non-profit organizations.

Re-imagine Programming Opportunities that Connect with Communities

DRIFF plans to deliver its programming with a deeper sense of engaging and centering on Durham Region communities and filmmakers. There is an opportunity to re-imagine the programming from the ground up, in a way that makes the community an integral part of the process.

GOALS

- Re-imagine programming model and streams.
- Ensure the festival programming is always community-driven.
- Create active community involvement in decision-making.
- Operationalize proposed changes.

OBJECTIVES

- Create a Programming, Education and Partnerships board committee that will work with DRIFF's Director of Programming to develop a program that addresses the needs of communities throughout Durham Region.
- Create programming streams with tie-ins to partnerships and targeted audiences.

- Host festival events throughout Durham Region. Consider community membership for selection/jury committees.
- Include free programming or a free stream of programs through corporate sponsorships and determine appropriate target audiences.
- Create a competition/awards program that gives local filmmakers the ability to produce work for the festival.
- Develop a three-pronged programming approach across the festival:
 - free screenings (DRIFF in a Jiff/some outdoor screenings)
 - red carpet events
 - next generation/expanded media screenings (digital or in-person)
- **Continue to support and present works by local, diverse, racialized, and Indigenous filmmakers.**
- Introduce additional accessibility supports for public programs and educational offerings, including closed captioning, audio-description, and multiple language offerings.
- Create a DRIFF filmmaker alumni network program.
- Evaluate new and enhanced ways to grow scholarship and discourse about the world of cinema in Durham Region through targeted public programs, partnerships with education institutions, and learning materials for specific age groups.
- Expand virtual programming offerings, identify areas for improvement, new opportunities, and relevance to DRIFF programming in the future.
- Establish a youth advisory group to develop youth-led programming opportunities and content.



Audience Feedback

“ We thoroughly enjoyed our evening at the drive-in and the movies were excellent. We’re looking forward to all the others. A movie twice a month would be great too!! It’s great to have the drive-in back again.”

“ Both films were very well done. Thought provoking and kept you on the edge of your seat! Thanks to DRIFF for offering enjoyable films here in Durham!”

“ What a fabulous feeling to be out with others to enjoy the arts!! Thank you DRIFF!”

*Audience feedback from DRIFF’s 2021 drive-in series was received anonymously.

87% of DRIFF audience surveyed would like to see more drive-in screenings.

51% of DRIFF audience surveyed attend to “actively support the Durham Region community.”

“ Thanks to COVID, many of the events took place online... but this was also the chance for worldwide panels via zoom. For me on the other side of the world (seen from Canada) — a nice experience.

Henning Backhaus, 2020 filmmaker



“ What an amazing experience! Incorporating safety measures due to COVID-19, the festival adapted seamlessly to a virtual format where ticket holders could watch the films and experience Q&A sessions afterwards with the filmmakers. The festival capped off the season with a drive-in viewing. Such a great night as we watched and honked for those amazing films!

Anne Taylor, DRIFF audience member and volunteer



Conclusion

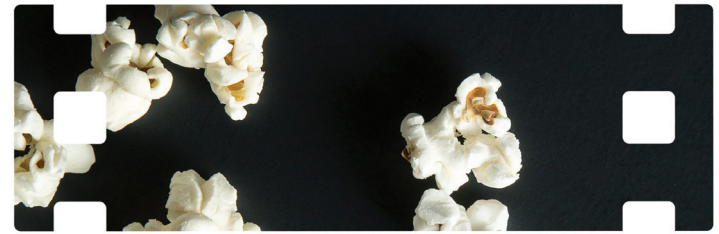
DRIFF is eager to embark on this transformational quest to change the way local communities perceive films, and especially films screened locally.

We will foster, build and promote a vibrant film culture in Durham Region that demonstrates inclusiveness while inspiring young filmmakers and providing them with a launch pad to success. We will do this by strengthening and expanding our community partnerships, leveraging our industry connections, prioritizing audience outreach and community engagement, and ensuring programming is community-driven. We believe that through a mutual love of film, we have the ability to build stronger communities that share compelling stories and perspectives to educate, provoke discussion, and foster empathy.

“ **It would be amazing** if young filmmakers got their start at DRIFF and came back to support the festival and the region.

- Audience feedback, 2020 survey

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DRIFF's strategic plan was made possible by:

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