



Vancouver International Children's Festival Society
Strategic Plan
September 2019-September 2024

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THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In November of 2018, the Vancouver International Children’s Festival Society (VICFS) Leadership Team and Board met to update the Society’s strategic plan, and the guiding framework for organizational development over the next five years (2019 – 2024).

Critical to the success of this initiative is fostering ownership of the plan from the VICFS Leadership Team and Board through feedback and engagement.

The first component of the process was the completion of SWOT & TOWS analyses and identification of potential Goals and Strategies for implementation. The dialogue centered heavily on two main focus areas:

- To nurture existing, and build new, strategic relationships.
- To find new revenue generation avenues.

The second component of the process involved the delivery of a draft Strategic Plan, for review by the Leadership Team and Board. This allows members to review the plan and provide feedback on accuracy and importance of each Goal and Strategy.

The document produced as a result of this process is a living document. It provides little value if placed on a shelf and forgotten. Strategic Planning is forward looking, and as such, will likely require revision in response to changes within the organization and externally.

HISTORY

The longest running annual children’s festival in the world, the Vancouver International Children’s Festival began as a theatre festival for young audiences, presenting national and international performances.

Today the Festival is multi-disciplinary, presenting theatre, music, dance, circus, puppetry and storytelling and over the years has become an inspiration to major cities throughout Canada and abroad, where annual children’s festivals now take place.

The Vancouver International Children’s Festival has come a long way over the last five years. Below is a summary of where the VICFS was in 2014, what has been implemented (in reference to the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan), and where the VICFS is currently.

2014 – Vancouver International Children’s Festival

- The VICF was on Granville Island for three years.
- School ticket sales fluctuated due to the School Board strike.
- Public capacity stayed much the same.
- The deficit was reduced from \$155K (in 2011) to \$59,717 (by 2014).

- The Festival was receiving complaints about the move to Granville Island, particularly regarding parking and ticket prices.
- All staff, including the AED worked part-time.
- Funders had been unhappy with the Festival, but by 2014 were starting to see changes that made them happy.

2014 – 2018 - What Has Been Acted On (per 2015-2019 Strategic Plan)

- 2014 - Created the new Strategic Plan and updated the Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles, and rebranded the Festival with a new logo.
- Developed Strategic Themes – Artistic Excellence, Creatively Playful and Partnership Development
- Created 4 perspectives to work with – Audience, Financial Sustainability, Internal Operations and Organizational Capacity
- 80% of the Goals have been achieved.
- Audience – Currently the Festival does not receive complaints about ticket prices, and the Festival sees many returning customers.
- Finance – the Festival is deficit free as of the 2018 fiscal year, though remains reliant on Government funding.
- Operations – produced first play, new partnerships, new website and strong marketing.
- Organizational capacity – Strong team, all positions have the required hours needed to complete the job, tech upgrades done

Current State

- Audience has embraced Granville Island as the VICFS' home.
- Increase in Government funding from BC Arts Council and Canada Council.
- Audience has not communicated concern around ticket prices.
- Recognised as a strong Festival nationally and internationally.
- Culturally diverse audience and programming.
- Strong team and more stability around money than we have had in over 15 years.

MISSION – WHY WE EXIST

We inspire and motivate young minds with professional artistic experiences that transform a child’s understanding of the world around them and what is creatively possible.

VISION – WHERE ARE WE GOING

The Vancouver International Children’s Festival aims to be a highly anticipated festival that is recognized internationally for creating unique and diverse celebrations of the arts for children and grownups.

In delivering new and diverse world-class live performances, we open a world of creative possibilities. A world in which future generations build on the passion for art and performance we share with them today.

ARTISTIC VISION – ARTISTIC GUIDE

The Vancouver International Children’s Festival Society presents contemporary, multi-disciplinary work that personifies artistic excellence. Our multi-disciplinary approach combines numerous artistic disciplines including theatre, dance, music, circus, media arts, site-specific work and visual arts. Our inclusive programming is culturally diverse and representative of regional, national and international artists.

HOW WE DO IT

- We search our nation and the world for bold and daring ideas in performance and art-based activities to showcase at our annual children’s festival.
- We stage year-long programming so adults can share professional artistic experiences with their children.
- We partner with like-minded organizations and funders to build a community that ensures accessibility and promotes cultural exploration as a part of a child’s development.
- We hire and mentor people who share our passion for art and performance for young audiences.

VALUES

Values serve as a cornerstone for decision making and guide the behaviour of the organization.

1. SIMPLE: We make it easy for a family/class to spend a day being creatively playful.
2. FUN TOGETHER: We make activities fun and creatively adventurous for kids and adults to enjoy together.
3. QUALITY: We surprise you every year with the extraordinary quality of our programming and our performers.
4. CREATIVITY: Imagination and artistic ingenuity governs our decision making. We are comfortable taking creative risks.
5. LOCAL: We look for ways to incorporate and celebrate BC and Canadian artists.
6. GLOBAL: We demand diversity in emotional experience: in people, language, ideas, attitudes and culture.
7. ARTISTIC RISK: Always looking for new, different, pushing the boundaries work for young audiences 0 – 12 years of age.

GOAL FRAMEWORK

While the Mission, Vision, Values and Key Success Factors remain static to provide a strategic framework, the 2019 – 2024 Strategic Plan has a notably increased weighting on clearly defined metrics (Key Success Factors).

The Key Success Factors are aligned with a set of Goals.

Each Goal is supported by Strategies, to shape the future direction of the International Children's Festival.

Each Strategy is linked to a set of Tactics – a clearly defined action plan set forth to achieve the Strategies, Goals, and KSFs.



DEFINING OUR SUCCESS 2019-2024

Key Success Factors (previously named “perspectives”), are measurable organizational milestones that address each of VICF’s Goals.

Key Success Factors act as a reference point for the development and alignment of VICF’s Goals, Strategies, and operational tactics.

Key Success Factors in 2024:

- Financial Sustainability = Profitable annually.
- Audience = Clear #1 Children’s Festival in the North America
- Organizational Excellence (Previously titled Internal Operations & Process) = First choice Children’s Festival for industry professionals - staff, volunteers, production, performers.

Goal Framework:

Focus Area	Goal Framework
Financial Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased Charitable giving.• Profitable year after year.• Generate new revenue streams.
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build, expand and grow the positive reputation of the Vancouver International Children’s Festival.• Obtain new audience demographics by delivering innovative programs and service “off-shoots” that support Festival objectives and increase competitive advantage.
Organizational Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Efficient business operations run by a productive and respectful workforce.• Leverage technology to obtain a competitive advantage.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS - HOW WILL MEASURE OUR SUCCESS? (all over 5 years)

Key Success Factor #1: Financial Sustainability (profitable annually)

- 5% Increase Ticket Sales.
- 10% Increase in combined fundraising, sponsor and grant revenue.
- Other programming such as co-productions and self-produced events/shows. The VICFS is willing to take a risk on a self-production over the next five years, to learn from and increase profitability over the long run.

Key Success Factor #2: Audience (clear #1 in the market)

- Unaided brand Awareness (10%) increase throughout Metro Vancouver.
- Positive Brand Perception (10%) increase throughout Metro Vancouver.
- Demographically diverse product offerings (2 – 5 # new products).

Key Success Factor #3: Organizational Excellence (first choice for industry professionals)

- Revenue generating partnerships.
- Full, engaged and multi-skilled Board of Directors and staff.
- Up-to-date digital technology infrastructure.
- Self-produced performances.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

KEY SUCCESS FACTOR: Financial Sustainability

GOAL: Profitable year after year

STRATEGIES	METRICS	TIMELINE
Build business relationships and offer sponsor opportunities that increase brand awareness and drive revenue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a Cost of Sales for each sponsor deal, not to exceed average of 10%. • Select 3 (new or current) sponsorable programs. • Achieve 5% compliance on sponsor investment thresholds. 	Year 1 Year 1 Year 2
Lobby external parties and advocate regarding issues the impact VICF.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define and develop relationships with third parties to secure benefits for the VICF. • Affect change in sponsorship regulations. 	Year 1 Year 2 & 3

KEY SUCCESS FACTOR: Financial Sustainability

GOAL: Increase charitable giving.

STRATEGIES	METRICS	TIMELINE
Diversify fundraising initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of fundraising events. • Identify and implement new strategies and more effectively use VICF's online donation platform. 	Year 2 & 3 Year 4 & 5
Expand Donor Base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% increase of active donors • Increase of \$2000 in donations 	Year 2 & 3

KEY SUCCESS FACTOR: Audience

GOAL: Build, expand and grow the positive reputation of the VICF

STRATEGIES	METRICS	TIMELINE
Build the VICFS brand through a strong and consistent educational content strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% unaided brand awareness in Metro Vancouver. • 10% positive brand awareness. • 10 public touch points throughout the year. • 25% email open rate. • 50% awareness of VICF as a non-profit Organization. • 5 direct marketing campaigns. • Offer a consistent VICF experience across all events (during the festival and in the off season) 	Ongoing.

KEY SUCCESS FACTOR: Audience

GOAL: Obtain new audience demographics by capitalizing on emerging trends to deliver innovative programs and service “off-shoots” that support Festival objectives and increase competitive advantage

STRATEGIES	METRICS	TIMELINE
Expand ticketing and service initiatives that appeal to a non-traditional VICFS demographic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create 2 – 5 new ticketing / service options to enhance festival experience. 	Year 2 & 3
Offer unique and innovative business collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 cross-promotions and collaborations (10 per year) that offer shared value. 	Year 2 & 3
Address Decolonization and related educational and performance initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire a consultant to advise on decolonization work, inclusive of a forward-thinking plan. • Implement Decolonization plan. 	Year 1 & 2, and year 2 & 3 Year 3

KEY SUCCESS FACTOR: Organizational Excellence

GOAL: Efficient business operations run by a productive workforce.

STRATEGIES	METRICS	TIMELINE
Implementation of a Respectful Workplace policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of a drafted policy, including an anti-harassment policy. 	Year 1
Increase operational efficiencies through relationships and contractual commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5% decrease in rental / re-occurring costs. Effective transition to new office space. 	Year 1
Every member of Staff and Board is clear in their role and has a clearly outlined direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal performance reviews completed mid-year, with formal reviews completed annually for each staff member. 	Year 1
Provide Staff & Board with the appropriate tools and support to empower success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to date digital technology. Complete Festival Operational Manual for staff positions and overall yearly logistics. 	Year 18 months

KEY SUCCESS FACTOR: Organizational Excellence

GOAL: Leverage technology to obtain a competitive advantage.

STRATEGIES	METRICS	TIMELINE
Use CRM to establish data baselines and benchmarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a CRM system that best meets the needs of VICF. Identify at least two data sets to track audience, volunteer, and partner/donor/staff retention and acquisition. 	Year 1 Year 2 & 3
Implement CRM to attain marketing excellence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain CRM training Build email marketing channels to increase awareness and revenue. Implement a customer survey Establish Customer Lifetime Value 	Year 1 Year 2 & 3 Year 2 & 3 Year 4 & 5
Develop a Digital Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergo a Digital Maturity Assessment Develop a VICF App 3500 downloads 	Year 1 Year 2 Year 2 & 3
Implement digital ticketing system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed understanding of operational requirements for digital ticket at each venue. Digital ticketing implemented in all venues. 	18 months Year 2

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS (HELPFUL & INTERNAL)

- Financial Sustainability:
 - Strong knowledge of granting opportunities.
 - Deficit free
 - Completed first self-production.
 - Strong audience for trivia nights.
 - Outreach programs exist.

- Audience:
 - Unique Programming:
 - Long history of presenting indigenous works.
 - Embrace multiculturalism.
 - History of presenting multi-language and multi-national performances.
 - Wheelchair accessible.
 - Positive brand association.
 - Festival is based in Vancouver, a tourism hub.
 - Excellent family experience, offer a way for families to connect and bond.

- Organizational Excellence:
 - Staff & Board:
 - Highly engaged Executive Director.
 - Highly engaged and diverse Board of Directors.
 - Sense of autonomy and support within staff team.
 - One of the highest paying festivals for staff and crew.
 - Knowledge and buy-in of Vision and Mission.
 - Positive staff-board dynamic.
 - Strong relationship with professionals who want to work with VCIF.
 - Offer internships.
 - Experienced and committed production crew.
 - Board has diverse networks.
 - Strong volunteer program and volunteer base.
 - Strong team mentality.
 - Take good care of artists.
 - Deep professional social networks.
 - Depth of professional work experience.
 - First and longest running Children's Festival in North America.

WEAKNESSES (HARMFUL & INTERNAL)

- Financial Sustainability
 - Missing fundraising opportunities.
 - Budget has reached limits.
 - No Title Sponsor secured.
 - Risk averse with regards to programming, in relation to VICF mandate.
- Audience
 - Ancillary festival programming is consistent year over year.
 - Programming does not capture 13-18 year-olds' attention.
 - Festival dates in relation to the Surrey International Children's Festival.
- Organizational Excellence
 - Insufficient budget to support additional staff hours.
 - Volunteer database software is out of date.
 - I.T. infrastructure is out of date.
 - I.T. infrastructure does not allow staff to be as effective and efficient as they could be.
 - Software is not integrates & streamlined (eg. CRM)
 - Insufficient office space.
- VICF Board clarity
 - Around what kind of Board the VICF is.
 - Around individual Board accountabilities and responsibilities.

OPPORTUNITIES (HELPFUL & EXTERNAL)

- Financial Sustainability
 - Have an available rental space (social enterprise)
 - New granting opportunities available, as VICF is no longer in a deficit position.
 - Alignment and partnerships with other Arts Organizations (Co-Produce, Co-Present).
 - Partner with local brands and companies.
 - Partner with Squamish Nation.
 - Explore Celebrity Endorsements.
 - Better leverage data and technology.
 - Demographics
 - Targeted Marketing
 - Volunteer Engagement.
 - Sponsorship
 - Secure title Sponsor
 - Partnership/Sponsorship opportunities with service providers (hotels, transport, IT, etc.)
 - Build relationship with car share programs (TO DO)
 - Offer car seat “check-in” service.
 - Fundraising – new events and opportunities.
- Audience
 - Explore opportunity with WeDay.
 - Strong show production.
 - Vancouver is a world-class city, a global destination.
 - Festival has a very good reputation.
 - Offer workshops at schools
 - Technological reach to engage with Parents, Students, Communities that cannot attend Festival. (eg. Live Stream).
 - Hospitality Packages
 - Build out and educate about what we do
 - Use the off season to engage with audience (Off-Date programming.)
 - “No-screen”, “no-technology” trend to capitalize on and bring families together.
 - Unexplored programming opportunities (eg. Cooking, augmented and virtual reality)
 - Indigenous art and performances.
- Organizational Excellence
 - Take advantage of App software.
 - Festival App (as for conferences)
 - Create sponsor opportunities.

- Kids section
- Staff volunteer section
- Leverage University students for App development.
- Variety of online tools available, for VICF to engage with volunteers.
- new relationships with Government.
- Research / better understand our donor base.
- Strong relationship with Law Firm.
- Strengthen Social Media Presence
- Data collection around Granville Island access.
- Many CRM programs available, and variable costs.
- Emotional / Emotive marketing trends.

THREATS (HARMFUL & EXTERNAL)

- Financial Sustainability
 - Funding
 - Funding changes with a new government (impact of elections).
 - Competition for funding with other Arts organizations.
 - Difficult to secure funding because VICF is not a somber cause.
 - Granville Island
 - Governance.
 - New parking regulations, restrictions, costs (requires public education).
 - Granville Island venues' management change, resulting in new and unfamiliar staff.
 - Limited capacity to grow due to Granville Island's physical size.
 - Limitations around Sponsorship.
 - Challenges of securing sponsorship dollars.
 - Office space is expensive, and of limited availability.
 - Increasing cost of Hotels for performers' lodging.
 - Live streaming – non-permissible by Actors' Union.
- Audience
 - Reduced parent volunteer involvement in schools.
 - School bus policy.
 - Surrey International Children's Festival.
 - Funded by the City of Surrey.
 - Takes "marketing space".
 - Garneres commitments from local schools.
 - Perception that VICF moved to Surrey.
 - Upcoming BCTF (union) bargaining.
 - Competition for media
 - Vancouver School Board teacher-student ratios.
 - Arts Umbrella programming.
 - Increasing cost of living wage within the Lower Mainland.
 - Other children's programs that compete for discretionary spending.
- Organizational Excellence
 - Ticketing technology trends.
 - Arts Starts – provides free programming in schools.
 - Perception that VCIF is a for-profit organization.
 - Squamish Nation land development plans under Burrard Street Bridge.
 - Everyone striving to be unique with alternative innovative programming.
 - Volunteer base is predominantly comprised of high school students, therefore volunteer engagement is challenging.
- Other
 - Weather