



EVENTS NOVA SCOTIA

Inspiring times

CHAPTER 7: THE PEOPLE

People – the board, committee members, management, staff and volunteers – make the festival happen.

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Leadership

Strong leadership is a critical element in successful festival development and operations.

Your leadership team should have the following skills and expertise:

- Vision – seeing what can be and acting on it
- Passion – enthusiasm and drive in making it happen
- Team building – leading by example, competent and effective
- Communication – providing training, clear objectives, and delegating authority
- Connections – the ability to make sponsorship connections within the business community
- Expertise – knowing what needs to be done

Good leaders have a combination of most of these characteristics, along with a careful balance of self-esteem and humility. They are good at getting people to buy into the vision and motivating them to help pursue it. They provide an environment in which the people they are leading are inspired to achieve what is expected of them.

Board of Directors and Committees

Events are usually started by people with a passion for an idea and their community. Invite people onto the board who are not only visionaries, but also bring a particular expertise needed to make a successful event.

Support Your Board of Directors

"We have worked hard over the years to put the right board in place that serves the festival properly in its continued growth. So, it's important to give them the tools and comfort level to support that. For the past several years, we have engaged consultants at the board level to help us in each phase, last year we completed a five-year visioning and strategy process. This year, we are enlisting a consultant to address board governance."

Lia Rinaldo, Managing Director

Devour! The Food Film Fest, Wolfville

The Board of Directors

A board of directors is often established to oversee the direction, development, and finances of an event. They are hands-off in terms of daily management. Festival and event organizers are obligated to provide regular updates to the board.

When looking for board members, seek out people who have senior management experience, financial oversight expertise, and who have influence and contacts in the community.

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Here are some other principles and tips to follow:

- Keep the board small: 10 persons or fewer. Large boards are less effective and limit the active participation of individual members.
- Identify key roles required by board members such as
 - treasurer
 - lawyer
 - marketing and promotions
 - business connections
 - connections with community and government stakeholders
- The board's mandate is to play the part of overseer; they are not directly involved in daily management. Boards have the ultimate authority in terms of structure and finances but must understand that management of the event is left to staff and volunteers.
- Board members should meet at least once a month in the beginning of a venture and more frequently as the event deadline gets closer. Ensure that board members are aware of the time commitment, number of meetings, and volunteer work required outside of meetings.
- The board should focus its efforts on
 - setting policy, goals, and objectives
 - approving business plans and budget proposals
 - considering and approving capital projects and other major expenditures
 - monitoring performance and holding festival management accountable for results
 - using the influence of its members to get funding, seek sponsors, and represent the interests of the festival to the community
- The board should not
 - interfere in operational matters under the authority of the festival management
 - provide direction to staff other than the senior manager
 - represent themselves individually as the voice of the enterprise (that's the role of the board as a whole, or the senior manager)
 - publicly disagree with the management (disagreements should be dealt with around the board table)

The board must also establish an organizational structure and assign responsibilities, such as signing authorities, responsibility for contracting, etc. You need appropriate policies in place early on. Make sure the board arranges director's insurance to protect them from liability. Get legal advice on this.

Your board may want to investigate taking a board governance-training program. These are available throughout the province at minimal cost. Check out the resources, training, and other insights available through the Community Sector Council of Nova Scotia (<https://www.csc-ns.ca/what-we-do>), an organization dedicated to working with non-profit and voluntary organizations.

Committees

Depending on the scope of the event, the board may want to establish subcommittees to provide better direction and oversight to the most critical areas, such as the following:

- Programming/artistic
- Sponsorship and fundraising
- Government funding
- Marketing and media relations
- Finance
- Volunteer development
- Production and logistics

For larger, more significant events, management and staff can handle some of these functions, such as programming/artistic, marketing, and sponsorship.

Management and Staffing

Each event is different. Some have a small staff along with volunteers; others are solely volunteer based. As event managers, your job is to be clear on the work expectations and to provide the training and tools to do the job.

The following are various areas requiring management and staff:

General Management:

- Planning and budgeting
- Personnel
- Accreditation
- General administration and overall supervision of each area of operation

Site Operations:

- Site management and maintenance
- Logistics and general operations, including setup and teardown
- Signage
- Parking
- Security

Festival Operations:

- Regular programming
- Concerts or other specialty programming
- Artist/performer liaison
- Stage management
- Technical production for staged entertainment/events
- Concessions
- Volunteer management

Partnerships:

- Sponsorship
- Fundraising
- Partner liaison

Promotion:

- Marketing and promotion
- Social media engagement and web platforms
- Media relations
- Group sales
- Function reservations

Guest Services:

- Hospitality and visitor services
- Artist/performer hospitality
- VIP services

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Finance and Accounting:

- Box office/admissions
- Banking, cash control
- Accounting
- Management reports
- Payroll
- Purchasing
- Billing, collections, and payments

At smaller events, many of these duties will be rolled into one or two people. At larger events, there may be a general manager, section managers, and staff, as well as volunteers. The better option is to add more people later than to start with a top-heavy organization that gets overly entangled in its own structure.

Support Your Board of Directors

"It's ALL in the details. With over 100 events in the span of our week-long event and so many departments and people feeding into each and every single one, it's important to capture every detail and ensure it's shared with the right team members and partners to deliver that experience. We love Google Docs."

Lia Rinaldo, Managing Director

Devour! The Food Film Fest, Wolfville

Training

Training for event staff and volunteers can be done through orientation sessions held on- or off-site a few days before the event. These would include security training, box office training, and sessions about radio use, cell phone use, and etiquette. Be sure to make cultural competency training mandatory for all staff. Cultural competency training ensures everyone understands the importance of inclusion, diversity, and understanding, creating a positive experience for all participants.

Uniforms and Other Identifiers

Staff and volunteers need to have some sort of uniform or identifier. The uniform can be a unique event t-shirt (preferably brightly coloured so they can be easily identified by audience and staff), festival cap, or just their accreditation (name sticker or badge lanyard).

If badge lanyards are being used, be sure to identify the role of the person. For example, Volunteer, Transport, Security, Staff, Event Director, Performer Manager, Volunteer Manager, etc.

The identifier makes it clear to visitors where they can go for assistance. It is also an excellent way for staff and volunteers to identify each other in a crowd.

Security staff need some way to uniquely identify themselves, perhaps with a different colour festival t-shirt (one that is easily recognizable when it gets dark). Some festivals will print SECURITY on the back of the t-shirts; others will go with a less conspicuous EVENT STAFF label.

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Code of Conduct

Whether you call them policies, guidelines, or rules of conduct, you will need some form of written document that outlines the event's expectations of behaviour from staff and volunteers. Having expectations clearly stated at the beginning makes it easier on everyone. As well, you have something to fall back on in the event that you need to fire or discipline a staff member or volunteer.

It is much easier to loosen the rules once they are in place than to try to apply restrictions after the fact. Find a balance between being too strict and simply outlining your expectations for the best behaviour from each person, as befitting your festival goals and objectives.

The Event Manual

Put all of the foregoing information in a master manual and provide copies to each working group as a reference document. The manual should contain at least the following:

- Overview and/or history of the event
- Site plans
- An event program
- Rules and code of conduct
- Contact list
- Emergency plan/safety and emergency procedures to be followed
- Staff and volunteer job descriptions
- A separate document with specific policies and procedures for individual areas
- Meal provisions
- Parking details for staff and volunteers
- Volunteer recognition party details

Helpful Tip: Rules of Conduct Points to Consider for Your Festival or Event

Staff and volunteers will:

- *treat all festival goers as welcomed guests and be as positive, respectful, and helpful as possible*
- *wear their accreditation and uniform when on duty*
- *receive a meal ticket for each four hours worked*
- *be scheduled to work at least two shifts of at least four hours each before being granted free access to the festival site off-duty (more suited for a festival running for multiple days)*
- *have meals in the designated area for staff and volunteers when in uniform*
- *not wear their uniform and accreditation when visiting the festival site off-duty, and especially when drinking alcoholic beverages*
- *never drink alcoholic beverages on duty*
- *park in designated staff/volunteers' area*
- *contact the general manager or designate in the case of any media inquiries; never give interviews or answer media questions; always politely refer them to the general manager*
- *never smoke in uniform*

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- Media relations policy
- All policies, procedures, working group roles and job descriptions
- A critical path schedule for all tasks necessary from the planning stage up to the event itself, throughout the event and post-event activities as well. Code each task as a “must have” or “want to have,” with emphasis given to the former.

Design the manual so it can also be used to record dates of completion of tasks, along with comments designed to assist planning for the next festival year.



Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of every event. They come with a variety of experience, talent, and dedication. Recruiting volunteers for a new event can be a challenge. It's important to ensure they are taken care of and not overworked. Ask yourself these questions:

- Will people want to volunteer for this festival?
- What's in it for them?
- What job satisfaction will they get?
- What rewards will they receive?
(And it should be more than a t-shirt.)
- Will they be able to progress from year to year?

Volunteer Management

Having a volunteer manager is imperative no matter if you have a handful of volunteers or hundreds.

Volunteers' need to be given the same level of care and support as paid employees, if not more so. Volunteers will need to know how they are doing, who to go to for information and assistance, and where to find the tools and resources they require. They will want to feel “in the loop” and part of the process.

Volunteers, like paid staff, need guidance. Don't be afraid to inform a volunteer if their actions or tasks are not being performed correctly. There are many moving parts to a large event and everyone needs to be on the same path to success.

Although a formal performance evaluation is not required, some form of feedback is beneficial. Some volunteers may need a written evaluation for their school or organization.

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Having a core group of lead volunteers you have worked with before is valuable when designing and implementing recruiting efforts, and outlining roles and job descriptions. (This group is also a good place to start when you are ready to hire staff.)

Recruiting

Before you start recruiting, you should identify what areas will need volunteers, how many hours and people are required, create job descriptions, and list the skills and abilities needed for each position.

Matching the skills and interests of the volunteers available to you with the tasks that need to be accomplished can go a long way toward attracting the interest of potential volunteers and keeping them motivated and involved.

Identify some of the benefits of volunteering for your festival/event and promote these benefits in your efforts to attract volunteers. They might include such things as the opportunity to

- build capacity and knowledge
- strengthen leadership skills
- meet people and have fun
- build networks and contacts

You also need to keep in mind the age range of volunteers and set restrictions. Often youth will volunteer out of good intentions, but keep in mind any liabilities that may come with having underage youth working at your event.

1. Volunteer Nova Scotia is an online resource tool that will help match organizations with volunteers and vice versa. As an

organization, you can create a profile page and advertise your volunteer positions to registered volunteers. For more info, see <http://www.volunteers.ca>.

2. Social media is a great way to recruit volunteers. Post on community Facebook pages, e-blasts, and your event's own social media pages to be shared by board members, staff, and community members.

3. Local community promotions can work as well. Many festivals use community resources, such as press releases along with flyers or posters, at arenas or recreation centres. You can also approach

- service clubs
- sports associations
- air, sea, or army cadets
- high schools, community colleges, or universities
- tourism associations
- church groups
- seniors' homes
- corporations or government (social or sports groups within these organizations)
- municipal employees

4. Ask your existing volunteers, if you have some.

Have an application form for volunteers, along with some basic information that outlines expectations.

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Screening Volunteers

Requirements for volunteer checks have been strengthened in the past few years, both through legislation and social policy. Volunteer Canada has a 10-step process for screening volunteers as well as some basic information at https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/researchandresources_docs/10%20Steps%20of%20Screening%20Brochure.pdf.

If your staff and volunteers have, or will have, contact with children or other vulnerable people, you need to develop and implement appropriate screening policies and practices. Some festivals will screen volunteers through the police to check for a history that may compromise the integrity of the festival and put staff, other volunteers, or visitors at risk. Check with your local law enforcement agency or through the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Environment (<http://novascotia.ca/lae/volunteerism/>) to ascertain whether this step is feasible or advisable for your event.

Volunteer Canada has produced this comprehensive screening handbook https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/researchandresources_docs/2012%20Edition%20of%20the%20Screening%20Handbook.pdf.

Orientation and Training

Having a volunteer handbook is an excellent way to convey your vision, objectives, and expectations and to serve as a resource for your volunteers. Each volunteer should also have a job description and schedule of hours so they have a clear idea of what is expected of them.

Having an orientation is also a good idea. Your orientation session could start out with all the volunteers attending a general briefing and site tour, and then specific training with their section leaders,

if appropriate. Remember to take this opportunity to relay to the volunteers how important they are to the success of the festival and how much their time and energy is appreciated.

Orientation and training sessions can seem to take up your time close to the event, however, you need to train volunteers as completely as possible and avoid rushed explanations the day of the festival. Again, the scope and scale of the event, and the specific role of the volunteer, will dictate the level of training needed.

Safety and Liability

Make sure you are following all occupational health and safety regulations to protect yourself and your volunteers. For example, some regulations state that while a stage is being erected, the site is considered a construction zone; therefore, everyone must wear safety boots and a hard hat. Check into the rules and regulations well before your first setup day to avoid expensive, and possibly time-consuming, surprises.

Volunteers should also be well-trained in your risk management procedures and have clearly set out steps to follow in case of problems.

Volunteer Hospitality

Some festivals provide a separate area for volunteers to check in, take breaks, and have meals. This gives volunteers an opportunity to mingle, share information, and rest in relative peace and quiet.

You will need to establish the procedure for volunteer meals – whether concessions will provide the refreshments, or you operate a BBQ or some other foodservice specifically for volunteers and staff. Further discussion on this subject, as well as on identifiers such as t-shirts, was provided earlier in the Management and Staffing section.

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Recognition

Be sure to thank volunteers along the way. The staff and the board of directors should make a point of verbally thanking volunteers they meet or work a shift with. If possible, the volunteers could also be thanked as a group each day over the PA system.

Most people simply want to feel they are valued, and each person's sense of value comes in many guises. It could come in the form of verbal appreciation, free parking on-site, free meals, complimentary admission for friends and family, unlimited access to the festival outside of their volunteer hours, festival pin or other memorabilia, or a festival t-shirt. If your community festival has a small number of volunteers, then perhaps you can afford to personalize the gift or recognition and tailor it to the individual.

A volunteer recognition wrap-up party, complete with a thank-you certificate or plaque, is a great way to complete their experience. Singling out certain volunteers for their outstanding work can either motivate or deflate your volunteers. This is because everyone's efforts made your event a success. Take care how you word any specialized awards or gifts.

Meeting with volunteers after the festival is important to get their input as to how things went, identify problems that need to be addressed in the future, and explore their potential role in next year's festival. This will help ensure they feel part of the team and will encourage their return. Explore their interest in becoming involved in different aspects of the festival/event so as to maximize the appeal to them and reduce the potential for burnout.

Sending an invitation letter early in the planning stages to join the festival the next year is a nice touch and sets the tone of appreciation and welcoming volunteers back.

Numerous resources are available on recruiting and working with volunteers. Check out <http://novascotia.ca/lae/volunteerism/> for resources and links to other sources.

Key Takeaways

Your festival needs strong leadership – from the board and from management, whether they are paid or volunteer.

Volunteers are the backbone of your event. Recruit carefully, train and manage them, and recognize their help regularly.

Develop a festival manual – it should cover everything including policies and procedures, codes of conduct, and a critical path schedule.



For more information, please contact our Events Nova Scotia staff
at Communities, Culture and Heritage at events.novascotia.ca/contact