



SASKATCHEWAN MUSIC FESTIVAL

— ASSOCIATION —

Classical Competitive Festivals



Strategic Plan 2020-24

BACKGROUND

The Saskatchewan Music Festival Association (SMFA) is committed to promoting excellence in music and speech arts by providing performance and educational opportunities through competitive music festivals in the Province of Saskatchewan. In addition to the production of 47 district music festivals, SMFA provides a provincial Syllabus, adjudicator hiring for affiliated festivals, and opportunity for music and speech competition. Member festivals are organized by local volunteers and judged by qualified professional musicians.

Areas of competition for musicians are multi-disciplinary and can be found in the provincial Syllabus. Entrance to SMFA festivals is accessible to all. Participants may enter any classes for “adjudication only” and forego marks and scholarships.

SMFA undertook a strategic planning session in 2012 to oversee the growth and development of the association over a five year period. This session led to the creation of three strategic themes including leveraging technology, enhancing member and public awareness and engagement, and building new partnerships.

Another planning process took place in 2017 to develop a strategic/diversification plan from that time until 2022. The themes identified during that process included education and encouragement, outreach, collaboration and internal assessment.

With SMFA having completed the majority of its priorities on its 2012 plan and the 2017 plan focussed on diversity, now is an ideal time to develop a longer term strategy for the next four year period. This strategy also complements the three year Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund application that is currently underway.



VISION

Enhancing lives and community through music and the spoken word.

MISSION

Promoting excellence in music and speech through competition, performance, and educational opportunities for people of Saskatchewan.



STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS

Strengths

The following items were listed as strengths for the organization:

- Opportunities for live music making
- Well-organized competitions
- Strong funding relationships
- Effective Executive Director and staff
- Dedicated volunteers network
- Comprehensive syllabus
- Well-trained, knowledgeable adjudicators
- Informative Conference and AGM
- Large network of district festivals
- Passionate leadership
- Positive role models for younger performers
- Rich history in communities
- Provincial opportunities
- District level success

Weaknesses

The following items were listed as weaknesses:

- Limited staff capacity
- Aging volunteer base
- Branding in larger community
- Communication but not engagement
- Limited diversity
- Limited mentorship
- Limited music partnerships
- Difficulty promoting relevance
- Old-fashioned branding
- Single major source of funding
- National organization



Opportunities

The following items were considered opportunities:

- Provide outreach and master classes for mentorship
- Promote the relevance of our competitions
- Invite people to speak to their successes
- Showcase elite students
- Converse, in a positive and supportive way, with liaison festivals
- Consider what we want at the national level for our elite students
- Showcase performers in local communities
- Partner/collaborate with OSAC
- Identify communities that need music teachers and accompanists
- Partner with our Provincial Universities
- Increase numbers at AGM
- Celebrate rich history
- Improve communication and connection with district festivals
- Promote opportunities at all levels
- Increase diversity
- Mentor new teachers
- Connect with other musical communities
- Advocate for classical music
- Partner with newcomers' groups

SMFA Threats

The following were listed as threats:

- Lack of diversified funding
- Aging volunteers
- Competing festivals for students
- Struggling economy
- Over-scheduled students
- Funders unaware of district festival success stories
- Lack of rural teachers/students studying music
- Competition for activities and options
- Rural depopulation



SMFA STRATEGIC GOALS

A thorough review of SMFA's priorities based on its vision and mission, along with the SWOT analysis, review of previous strategic plans, and internal program and service review led to the following goals:

GOAL 1: TO ENHANCE THE EXISTING SMFA BRAND

SMFA is well-known and respected among music festivals but it should strive to promote its existing brand to a wider audience to increase interest in music festivals, enhance partnerships, encourage volunteer development, and to provide a better understanding of the important role that music festivals play in our province.

Action 1: Emphasize greater engagement as part of communications efforts

SMFA has increased member communications in recent years, enhanced its website and become active on social media. However, these communications efforts tend to be one-sided and SMFA should strive to create a dialogue with its key stakeholders as two-way communications will lead to greater interest and participation in its programs. As part of this action, SMFA should solicit success stories from its members – whether it's welcoming newcomers, working with Indigenous communities, finding new ways to encourage volunteerism, or promoting award-winning students. These stories should then be shared among members and stakeholders through social media, the website, newsletter, videos, media relations, etc. Success follows success and if the association can identify and promote these successes, then it will serve as a model for others to follow.

Action 2: Revisit current tag line: Classical Competitive Festivals

Several years ago SMFA added Classical Competitive Festivals as a tagline as part of its branding efforts to identify itself as an organization that promotes classical competitive music festivals as opposed to an umbrella organization that represents music festivals such as the Regina Folk Festival or the Saskatoon Jazz Festival. The organization has evolved beyond classical competitive festivals and includes jazz and other forms of music including speech arts. This tag line may be restrictive now that the organization has moved beyond classical competitive festivals. Classical-based competitive festivals may be a better description since most of the competitions are based from classical music and implies that it may have moved beyond its base. A greater discussion on this tag line is warranted since the overall goal is to enhance the existing brand and the current tag line doesn't properly represent the association, which then weakens the overall brand.

Action 3: Incorporate speech arts as part of brand

Speech arts have become an increasingly important component of SMFA and the board has recommended that it be incorporated into the mission. Despite its rising prominence, it remains somewhat buried in overall programming and promotion. SMFA should place greater importance on promoting speech arts and the important role it plays in enriching lives and community.

Action 4: Diversity should be incorporated into the SMFA brand

Incorporate diversity into all aspects of the organization. Consideration should be given to under-represented populations at all times to encourage their participation, which will strengthen the organization and lead to a better overall music community. For example, when looking to promote success stories, the association should consider successes in Indigenous or newcomer programming. These success stories are part of the SMFA's action item to increase overall engagement within Saskatchewan, but do not necessarily reflect an item that solely focusses on diversity.



GOAL 2: TO ENHANCE EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS

New partnerships were priorities that was identified during th 2012-17 strategic plan. Part of the rationale at that time was that SMFA’s main funding source was encouraging the development of new partnerships in order to increase efficiencies and reduce duplication. SMFA has a better working relationship with other provincial music organizations as a result of that goal, but board members identified that there remains a need to build upon these partnerships and to develop new partnerships if opportunities arise.

Action 1: Engage partners to address the need for music teachers

There was considerable discussion on the need to mentor music teachers to meet the association’s future needs. Concern was raised about the need to encourage new music teachers to assume leadership roles in local music festivals, and address teaching shortages, especially in rural areas. There is a desire to partner with the universities to match new music teachers with more established music teachers and festival volunteers to help mentor them to assume these roles. The development of music teachers in rural areas may be a priority for other music organizations as well. The Saskatchewan Music Educators Association (SMEA), in particular, might be interested in partnering with the SMFA on creating a music teacher/festival mentorship program. By working together, the costs and efforts to develop a mentorship program would be spread over different organizations and partnerships are favored by core funders. If a partnership approach does not materialize, then SMFA should consider its own approach.

Action 2: Engage with partners on music advocacy

In order for SMFA to achieve its vision of *Enhancing lives and community through music and the spoken word*, it must advocate for the benefits of music to key decision-makers including school administrators, government officials, parents, volunteers, students, and elected officials. These decision-makers can assist the SMFA in achieving its vision through their support. There are other organizations that share the same desire to promote the benefits of music to these key decision makers including SMEA, SRMTA, Saskatchewan Band Association (SBA), Saskatchewan Choral Federation (SCF), and the Saskatchewan Orchestral Association (SOA). As a collective that pools its resources, these organizations will have much more impact on a benefits of music campaign than any single organization. The SMFA should engage with these and other organizations to determine their willingness to create such a campaign.

Action 3: Engage with the music community on strategic alignment

With SMFA having identified the need to work with partners on mentorship and advocacy, it appears that there may be other opportunities to develop partnerships and that the community should work together on projects that match corporate goals. There is also a need to identify areas that organizations should be solely responsible for as their area of expertise. There was a greater emphasis in the previous strategic plan to work more closely together with other provincial music organizations, but in recent years there has been some drift in collaboration. There is merit in having the organizations work together to develop their strategic alignment – areas where they can collaborate and areas where they should remain separate or it’s clearly the responsibility of a single organization to deliver. SMFA may be the ideal organization to begin the engagement process with other organizations since the other ogranizations tend to start the development of their members and students into music festival programs.

GOAL 1: TO ENHANCE EXISTING SMFA BRAND

ACTION ITEM	RESPONSIBILITY	TASKS	OUTCOMES	PRIORITY
Emphasize greater engagement as part of communications efforts.	Staff	Identify areas where two-way dialogue with stakeholders is warranted. Research and profile success stories.	Greater interest in SMFA programs and services. Success stories are replicated throughout the province.	Developing interactive communications - long term goal. Identify types of successes to be profiled, distributed. Ongoing process.
Revisit current tag line: Classical Competitive Festivals.	Board/Staff	Determine the relevancy and develop a new tag line, if necessary. Staff responsible for implementing any changes.	Strengthening of the SMFA branch - better understanding of who and what SMFA is.	Discussion could happen in first year - implementation would take time. Introduce new tag line gradually to reduce costs.
Incorporate speech arts as part of brand.	Board/Staff	Determine the messaging. Highlight the growing importance of speech arts.	Stakeholders recognition that speech arts is a major component of SMFA.	No urgency to this action item but its prominence within the organization should be apparent by the end of the plan.
Incorporate diversity into the SMFA brand	Board/Staff/ Volunteers	Ongoing attention to showcase diversity and inclusiveness in messages and images.	SMFA is reflective and inclusive of the diverse nature of Saskatchewan populations.	On-going priority and completely operationalized by the end of the plan.

GOAL 2: TO ENHANCE EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS

ACTION ITEM	RESPONSIBILITY	TASKS	OUTCOMES	PRIORITY
Engage partners to address the need for music teachers.	Mentorship Committee	<p>Develop terms of reference for a Mentorship Committee.</p> <p>Identify potential partners for a mentorship program including SMEA/ universities and develop proposed mentorship model.</p>	New music teachers are properly mentored to replace existing music teachers/ festival leaders, especially in rural Saskatchewan.	There was considerable interest in this topic during the planning session and this enthusiasm should be carried forward as soon as possible to maintain momentum.
Engage with partners on music advocacy.	Board/Staff	<p>Reach out to other provincial music organizations to create a joint advocacy strategy.</p> <p>Creation of a joint advocacy committee to develop strategy. Should be shared responsibility or contracted to ensure equal workload among partners.</p>	All key stakeholders understand and support the benefits of music.	This priority should wait until all potential partners have completed their lottery trust grant applications and have received approvals so there is a better understanding of the shared resources available.
Engage with the music community on strategic alignment.	Board/Staff	Alignment meetings to be held to determine roles and responsibilities of each organization and to determine potential partnership opportunities.	Greater overall efficiencies within the music community.	<p>This process will begin with the mentorship and advocacy action items.</p> <p>When action items are underway, SMFA will be better able to determine the interest level of other organizations.</p>