Round Table Discussion Questions

1. **How can we encourage more instrumentalists (strings, brass, woodwinds, percussion) to enter festival? Are there barriers we might not be considering that inhibit their ability or desire to enter?**

- Encourage school divisions, band teachers, SBA, SMEA to support festival
    - Can SBA & SMEA distribute a survey to find out how band teachers feel about festival? Are they aware of festival?
- More accompanists needed
- Band teachers could be considering small ensembles (duets etc) in addition to full bands
- Difficult when there is not a band teacher in the community
- Face to face discussions can help inform teachers of opportunities in festival
- Band teachers are often not only band teachers; focus is split between several different types of classes… not enough time to spend on bands particularly
- Speech arts may be stressed in the absence of instruments, as it's low-cost and few barriers to entry
- Regina conservatory actually has their own instrumental festival due to high student interest – not affiliated with RMF

2. **Festival participants, teachers, and parents sometimes get frustrated with the registration process. Can your festival's registration process be simplified to reduce frustration? How else can you reduce registration friction?**

Questions to consider:
- Is there a mismatch between the information you ask for on the registration form and the information that you actually use? (E.g., do you ask for the Character Name in a musical theatre selection but then not print that information?)
- If entrants do find the registration process confusing, are there help documents/articles available to them?

- Mainline will offer help with registrations at libraries in Wolseley and in Indian Head. Students can bring registration information and committee members will get them registered correctly
- Moose Jaw entry secretary will be offering a Zoom session to educate participants on how to register correctly due to a high volume
- MJ offers an FAQ and a document that teachers can fill out with information that their students can then go and register with (using MFS)
- Watrous teachers often will register on behalf of students
- Kindersley is planning to offer a pre-registration info night, will also have a copy of syllabus available
- Participants are encouraged to enter early so errors can be caught with plenty of time to fix it
- Frequent syllabus changes can cause frustration with festival committees and registrants

3. **How does your festival present awards? If your awards are sponsored by specific individuals, community groups, or businesses, how are you recognizing them during the presentation? Do you present awards for individual class winners or for overall winners?**

- Kindersley lists donors in program, on posters, on social media, and they are announced on stage during final concert
- Kindersley also has started paying scholarships in cash to cut down on serve fees at bank
    - Then students winning multiple awards can receive one cash payout rather than multiple cheques
- Kipling requires students to bring completed thank you cards to final concert where they will then receive their scholarship (after a suggestion from Cherith)

- Mainline will run social media ads based on amount donated
    - Also invites donors to come present their own awards
- Watrous puts memorial blurbs in their program if the scholarship is being awarded in someone's memory
- Saskatoon requires thank you cards to be written before cheques can be received
- Mainline only accepts general donations and then apportion scholarships themselves

4. What is your festival doing to recruit, train, and retain volunteers?

- Watrous prefers to recruit from parents of entrants, they find that most people are reluctant to do executive positions
- Moose Jaw told their festival they were cancelling the festival unless they had volunteers and received a few new volunteers
- Saskatoon finds difficulty in placing volunteers in rooms where there are real or perceived conflicts of interest
- Sask Valley has required their executive/position volunteers to create itemized lists of their responsibilities – "hit by the bus" book
- Personal asks are important and make people feel more valued/important – Mainline will approach people at open mic nights/other musical events to find new volunteers
- "Never turn anyone away" – a willing volunteer can always be of use in some position
- For most volunteers, festival is a short-term commitment (albeit an intense one) – framing it this way or as a specific position that needs filling often yields better results
- Swift Current has a handbook that lists the responsibilities of every position so if a volunteer expresses interest they have something specific to point to
- Festival alumni are a good pool to approach

5. What's one thing your festival is doing very well?

- Moose Jaw has been increasing entries, multi-disciplinary night, Saskatoon has Kinsmen
- "Hard to narrow down" – lots of good things going on!
- Sask Valley is in touch all year with email lists, committee works well together, teachers are invested in the board
- Kipling offered free entries and saw higher entries
- Watrous instituted a family price cap for families with children doing several entries
- Gravelbourg is preserving a bilingual tradition
- In 2026 Mainline had one person in each community take on sponsorship/donations
- Spiritwood sells programs through the local pharmacy

6. What's one significant challenge your festival is facing?

- Watrous has aging and retiring teachers in the community, no band teacher, aging volunteer base
- No band teachers in many rural communities
    - Is it worth encouraging universities to place students in rural communities?
- Lack of teachers, lack of accompanists for instrumentalists/singers
- Many pianists feel that they require a lot of time (months and months) to prepare for an accompanying opportunity – lacking in time to practice
- Conflicting opportunities – kids are involved in sports, dance, etc – lots of things pulling their attention
- COL increases – is music a priority for families?