

2019

Deep Roots Music
Cooperative



DEEP ROOTS
MUSIC COOPERATIVE



STRATEGIC PLAN

2019-2022

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Cover photographs clockwise from top left: Reeny Smith, Rachel Beck, Lloyd Spiegel, David Francey, Mark Westberg, Terra Spencer and members of the Annapolis Valley Honour Choir

Introduction

The following pages describe the essence of the Strategic Plan of the Deep Roots Music Cooperative (DRMC) for the period 2019-2022. This plan was developed by the Deep Roots Board of Directors with input from members of the Deep Roots Community-

The document is organized to maximize the reader's understanding of DRMC's foundations as an organization. The plan first appears in summary form and is then followed by a discussion of newly formed operational goals.

Of significant importance in reading this plan is to understand that this is NOT a static document (nor is the plan static). The DRMC Board undertakes strategic analysis and discussion on a regular basis, regardless of whether it is formally recognized as such. While the Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles are expected to remain largely intact, the details of the plan as articulated in goals, measurements, and methodologies are subject to change as new circumstances emerge.

Part 1: The Board of Directors and the planning group

Commentary on Governance Model and Board Structure

Currently, the Deep Roots Music Cooperative operates under hybrid board model, toeing the line between a working board and a governance board. Although the board's official mandate most closely resembles that of a governance board (a board which provides general and policy oversight to the organization), several members of the board are also very active within DRMCs various committees; that is, they also often roll up their sleeves and carry out the work of the cooperative.

Board Composition

The current board composition is:

Board member	Role
Peter Mowat	President
Kevin West	Vice President
Gerry Davis	Treasurer
John Burdock	Secretary

Jim Murphy	Director
Jane Mangle	Director
Louise Hanavan	Director

Part 2: What is a strategic plan?

Introduction

By now, most people are somewhat familiar with the term ‘strategic plan’ within a non-profit context. A strategic plan – as the name implies – is a plan that identifies the organization’s purpose and desired outcomes and sets forth the most appropriate set of strategies for realizing those outcomes. The strategic plan contains a number of inter-related component parts that are reflected in the following diagram:



What is a vision statement?

A vision statement is a short statement that describes an idealistic future state of affairs that has come to exist as a result of the work an organization has done. It is not about the products or programs that help get you there, only a state of being. A good vision statement:

- Is memorable for everyone, and often evokes emotion
- Is short, positive, and inspiring, not bogged down by excessive jargon
- Is usually unachievable from a practical point of view; it is a star on the horizon – always pursued but never achieved
- By itself, does not provide enough clarity for the operational level of the organization

What is a mission statement?

A mission statement is a statement that – in some form or another – describes (a) what you do (with some level of specificity) (b) who you do it for, and (c) why you do it. A mission statement is your unique contribution to your vision, and you should be able to link the two together (with the mission statement supporting the vision). A good mission statement should provide readers with a better grasp on the day-to-day function of your organization than does the vision. A good mission statement:

- Includes action words, or verbs (to *do* something)
- Is more specific than the vision statement (remember, the two serve different functions)
- Is easy to understand to an outsider; they read it, they get it.

What are guiding principles, beliefs, and values?

Guiding principles are those beliefs, central tenets, values, or opinions that are closely held by the organization, and which – in many ways – become the yardstick against which strategic decisions are made. To an extent, guiding principles are an extension of the mission statement; they enable you to spell out the strategic priorities, values, and principles of the organization in a way that is not possible in a short, succinct mission statement. Good guiding principles:

- Fill in any blanks or questions that may be left over after the vision and mission are articulated
- Are an organization's attempt to add a level of detail and specificity to the mission and vision
- Generally speak to the strategic priorities and goals of the organization
- In conjunction with values and beliefs, describe the style in which the organization goes about its work

Part 3: Deep Roots' strategic plan summary

Strategic Plan

Based on the planning meeting in March 2019, the Deep Roots Music Cooperative has agreed to maintain the following Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles. It is worth noting that other than a minor edit to Guiding Principles, all of these foundational components remain unchanged from 2015 when they were last reaffirmed. The 2019 planning group was given ample opportunity to reflect on these and made a very intentional decision not to modify them in any way. This suggests a great deal of confidence that the vision, mission, values, and goals continue to reflect the organization's identity.

We included a 5th Operational Goal regarding the formation of committees.

Vision

We envision an enduring community, celebrating and enriching our culture through music

Mission

To create meaningful connections between cultures, community groups, artists, and audiences by offering music-related events, programs, and an annual festival.

Guiding Principles, Beliefs, and Values

Activities, projects, and programs of the Deep Roots Music Co-operative are guided by the following values, beliefs, and principles.

- Deep Roots is an enduring community: This 'enduring community' is defined by the following: A group of individuals united under the Deep Roots Music Cooperative that shares a love of music and the relationships it helps create.
- An abiding respect for people, land, and culture: We treat each other with respect and kindness; accepting differences and nurturing both personal and collective growth. A spirit of environmental responsibility is central to all our activities.
- The importance of music: Above all else, music is 'the glue' that holds the Cooperative together and unites its members. The elevated importance of music does not preclude Deep Roots from incorporating other important cultural aspects that share a connection with the musical events – such as visual arts, performing arts, spoken word, etc. – but it is our top priority.
- The development and promotion of our local area: The support and promotion of local artists is important to us. We also believe in supporting local businesses and cultural organizations.

- Cultural affirmation and relationship building: Coming together as one human family we share songs, stories, customs and traditions. We encourage cross-cultural collaboration and affirm the importance of Nova Scotia’s founding cultures.
- Consistent promotion of artistic growth and creativity: We work together to foster an environment that invites learning and growth, thereby supporting artistic development and infrastructure through education and outreach.
- Accountability: We develop quality musical programs rooted in effective planning and implementation processes. We are fiscally responsible and adhere to sound management principles.
- Celebration: We have fun and celebrate with each other. We welcome guests and do all we can to ensure their visit is enjoyable and entertaining.

Strategic Goals, or ‘what outcomes are we vying for’?

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Strategic Goal #1 | To celebrate the musical and cultural heritage of the Deep Roots Community. |
| Strategic Goal #2 | To create meaningful connections between cultures, community groups, artists, and audiences |
| Strategic Goal #3 | To enable the cultivation and growth of local music and artistic talent |
| Strategic Goal #4 | To enrich the local culture and quality of life by bringing global musical acts to the Annapolis Valley |
| Strategic Goal #5 | To play a role in building a long-term musical and artistic infrastructure in the Annapolis Valley |

Operational Goals, or ‘what will lead us towards our strategic goals’?

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Operational Goal #1 | Improve communication with and add value to sponsors and other stakeholders. |
| Operational Goal #2 | Continue to develop and add events that complement the annual Festival. |
| Operational Goal #3 | Maintain a strong focus on fundraising and revenue development. |
| Operational Goal #4 | Develop systems and strategies to recognize, train, and mentor Deep Roots volunteers |

Operational Goals #5 Establish a working group to identify needs, and provide recommendations, for the creation of individual committees, responsible for specific aspects of running the cooperative.

Part 4: Discussion on operational goals

Operational Goal #1

Improve communication with and add value to sponsors and other stakeholders

As with many other non-profit organization, Deep Roots’ sustainability is largely dependent on a variety of funders and sponsors. These funders and sponsors include governmental agencies (municipal, provincial, and federal), small businesses, and larger corporate sponsors. Each of these funders or sponsors provides financial resources to Deep Roots seeking something of value in return. Often, this comes in the form of advertising, community goodwill, or local economic impact.

Over the years, DRMC has proven quite effective at attaining financial support from these stakeholders. However, there remains a sense among the Deep Roots’ planning group that the co-operative could – and should – do more to show funders how much their contributions are valued. This acknowledgement is significant: many non-profits do little or nothing to thank their funders or to convey that the funder has received value.



Deep Roots has many sponsors that provide important revenue and in-kind contributions each year

With this in mind, the planning group has vowed to establish an effective and systematic approach to improving communication, demonstrating value, and enhancing relationships with funders, sponsors, donors, and other stakeholders. A systematic approach (which is employed by the most effective non-

profits, such as the Breast Cancer Society, Salvation Army, etc.) contrasts with an ad hoc approach where somebody from the organization thanks a sponsor if they happen to remember to do so.

The consensus is that Deep Roots currently operates somewhere between an ad hoc approach and a systematic approach. It intends to further professionalize its approach in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to):

- Capturing all funder and sponsor correspondence in DRMC’s new database and using the database to its full capacity in the context of sponsor and funder relations.
- Communicate with sponsors and other stakeholders throughout the year using tools such as the newsletter
- Determine what sponsors want and create a plan to deliver on the promise (survey)

During planning, it was acknowledged that the need for communication and recognition extends beyond simply those who provide funding. Although revenue providers clearly have an elevated importance to Deep Roots, the group feels that a systematic approach to communication and value demonstration could easily include all DRMC stakeholders.

Operational Goal #2

Continue to develop and add events that complement the annual Festival

It is clear that by nearly any measure, the annual Deep Roots Music Festival has historically been the anchor for the entire Cooperative. It is easily the Cooperative’s largest event, drawing the largest audience and accounting for the lion’s share of the Cooperative’s annual budget. Its importance cannot be understated.

In recent years, however, Deep Roots has showcased its ability to carry out successful events and programs apart from the Festival. They are considered successful in that they generate surplus income, bring large audiences, and help fulfill the Cooperative’s strategic goals. A few examples of this include the Blossom Blues concerts, Erin Costello, Port Cities, Musicians in Schools, and our very successful Annual Summer Concert Series.

Another example is with this past year’s festival, where we partnered with the Mud Creek Rotary Club and the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia in raising awareness of mental health issues - subsequently providing a \$2000.00 donation to the Foundation. These events and programs wowed audiences, developed talent, and helped to extend the Deep Roots brand beyond the Festival.



Catherine MacLellan presented Millefiore Clarke’s National Film Board production entitled *The Song and the Sorrow* to an appreciative audience on Thursday night of the 2019 Deep Roots Music Festival

Having experienced this success, the Cooperative is eager to build on this momentum by exploring new ideas that support its vision. However, the widely recognized barrier to doing so is volunteer labour (or rather the lack thereof). Indeed, there is a prevailing concern that the organization – in many cases – already pushes its volunteer base to its limit. The aforementioned events were largely planned and orchestrated on an ad hoc basis by volunteers who were personally passionate about the particular event.

It is also important to note here that the board is open-minded to various business models. An example of a potentially replicable business model is Deep Roots' past arrangement with the Town of Wolfville, in which DRMC was contracted to provide the entertainment for the Annual Summer Concert Series, and built in an administrative fee for its services.

Operational Goal #3

Maintain a strong focus on fundraising and fund development

At Deep Roots – as in many other non-profit entities – financial sustainability underpins almost every planning discussion. There have been several times over Deep Roots' sixteen year history where insolvency was a very real threat, and it is therefore natural that references to financial limitations arise frequently. The most recognizable symptoms of this are comments like 'We'd love to do that, but where would we get the money?' or 'We'd love to pay for a staff person but we don't have the money'.

These conversations are frustrating and difficult, and so Deep Roots' ultimate goal is clear: to arrive at a point where revenues are relatively stable and dependable, where cash reserves are at a comfortable level, and where one misstep (i.e. a poorly attended event) doesn't create dire consequences for the organization. With the success of recent festivals, the board feels we have arrived at that point where we have a bit of breathing room to explore new opportunities without the cloud of financial strain hanging overhead.

Many non-profits have a difficult time with these efforts for several reasons, but chief among them is that most people in any organization are interested in programs, events, and other 'fun' aspects of the organization. Most people do not join a non-profit primarily for the purpose of attracting funds or planning for financial viability. However, this is among the most important functions in any organization with Deep Roots being no exception.

It is important for Deep Roots to remember that it is tasked with nothing less than creating financial sustainability, which is among the most challenging aspects of organizational management. For this reason, it is important to populate the group strategically and to give it ample time to map out a plan. Expecting immediate results is a recipe for disappointment.

Operational Goal #4

Develop systems and strategies to recognize, train, and mentor Deep Roots volunteers.

Remarkably, the Deep Roots Music Cooperative has operated for nearly 17 years strictly as a volunteer-based organization. This is in contrast to the majority of non-profits, which typically either, evolve to

the point of hiring a paid staff member within the first 5-6 years (i.e. Coordinator, Executive Director) or burn out and cease operations. Although Deep Roots briefly had a paid staff member in 2009, it quickly found itself under financial strain and was forced to terminate the paid position. Nevertheless, it rebounded quickly and continues to thrive almost exclusively on the shoulders of an enthusiastic volunteer base.

Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact ingredients that have sustained this volunteer base over time, most would agree that leadership has been instrumental. More specifically, it has been the efforts of several volunteer leaders who have – year after year – organized and managed a much larger group of hands-on volunteers to ensure successful events and programs. Regardless, the board agrees that it is important to ‘professionalize’ or ‘systematize’ its volunteer management.

The process of achieving this will in many ways mirror the effort to systematize fundraising and sponsor relations, which was discussed earlier. The process will require examining current volunteer management strategies, exploring how volunteer needs and motivations are changing, and charting a path to ensure all volunteers have a consistent experience under the Deep Roots umbrella.

As Deep Roots takes on this goal, it should make great efforts to preserve the elements (tangible or intangible) that have made its volunteer management so admired over the years. Introducing valuable new components (i.e. volunteer mentorship, training processes, reward systems) is an important step forward, but these new components must respect the culture that DRMC volunteers are accustomed to.



Much has been written about best practices in volunteer engagement and management, and DRMC may wish to review some of this literature first. A few ideas to recognize volunteers included:

- Each MC at the Festival introducing volunteers over the course of the weekend

- Partnering with the Town of Wolfville for Volunteer Appreciation Day
- Having high-definition screens with volunteers' pictures
- Having a template for volunteer certificates or statements of involvement that could be used in personal portfolios
- Having artists sign a poster to give to volunteers
- Sending Christmas cards to volunteers

Operational Goal #5

Establish a working group to identify needs, and provide recommendations, for the creation of individual committees, responsible for specific aspects of running the cooperative.

The board recognizes the need to establish a working group, which will be tasked to identify and recommend the establishment of committees dedicated to planning various aspects of DRMC activities. This will ensure dedicated focus and planning to the task at hand.

Other Goals, Themes, and Areas of Possible Action

Although Deep Roots has established five major areas of priority, there were a number of other important ideas and discussions that arose during the planning session. It is important not to lose sight of these as DRMC moves forward, and so we will briefly consider a few of them now

"The Database"

The Deep Roots database (which is both in use and in line for further development), was discussed frequently. It is clear that the group feels it plays a central role in the organization, primarily as it relates to sponsor relations, stakeholder communications, volunteer management, and artist/talent communication.

Evaluation and analysis

There appears to be a consensus around the idea that Deep Roots could stand to improve its data collection and analysis. Although the organization does collect a great deal of feedback from event audiences, the general feeling is that evaluation, analysis, and reporting should be implemented uniformly through all functional areas. In 2019 we engaged the Marketing firm Accuity, to analyze our current market platforms. Going forward, the relevance of social media cannot be overlooked. This may require a review of current research methods and a re-think of how DRMC can maximize the use of its data (ie: on line surveys as an example).

Membership

Deep Roots has defined 'membership' in several different ways over its 17 year history, and yet there seems to be some uncertainty about whether the current definition is the most appropriate. While this

may not be the Cooperative's most pressing or urgent issue, it is nonetheless important and should be addressed in a timely manner.

Merchandise and concessions

Merchandise and concession sales represents a relatively small component of Deep Roots' annual budget, and one planner noted that it's unclear what the long-term strategy for merchandise sales should be. It would be wise to hold continuous discussions around the role that merchandise sales will (or could) play in DRMC's future.

The founding cultures

There was some discussion around Deep Roots' guiding principles. Specifically, a few planners raised questions (though not necessarily concerns) about the way DRMC has identified Nova Scotia's 'founding cultures'. We agreed the cultural diversity and history of our province was broad and encompassed many cultures, and therefore agreed to remove the word "four" in reference to our founding cultures.

Re-thinking promotional strategies

It was noted during planning that Deep Roots has tried out some new promotional strategies in recent years (i.e. magnetic automobile billboards) that have brought about positive returns. It was also suggested – and agreed – that DRMC should consider a number of 'outside-the-box' promotional tactics, and that some traditional methods (i.e. postering) may be passé. The group agreed it would be beneficial to further review the role and impact of social media with an eye to finding the right balance between traditional and new age marketing.

Identifying 'strategically appropriate' sponsors

As the role of sponsorship solicitation personnel continues to evolve, questions were raised about the 'overall direction' of Deep Roots' approach to sponsorship. More specifically, several planners wondered aloud which companies or organizations would be considered strategically appropriate for DRMC. It is a very important question, and while the board currently maintains control over this area, the parameters of 'appropriate sponsorship' may be in need of clarity.

Strategic partnerships

There is never a shortage of ideas about potential new strategic partners for Deep Roots to work with. The list of potential partners is long, and includes performing venues, non-profit organizations, artists, arts organizations, and more. It is therefore important that the board encourages volunteers to bring forward new opportunities as they recognize them. Deep Roots has always been at its best when it empowers volunteers to find new and creative ways to build the Cooperative's brand and reputation.

Part 5: Conclusion

After 16 years of promoting and bringing music to the Valley, it is evident that Deep Roots is at a very positive juncture in its development. There were no major questions about the fundamental direction of the organization, which left more time to generate specific ideas about how to move forward.

We have been very pleased with the success of more recent initiatives, such as partnering with the Town of Wolfville to present the Annual Summer Concert Series, and of our Musicians in Schools program. These have served to help achieve our goals and in raising brand awareness.

Our recent festivals have been successful endeavours, thanks in large part, to a dedicated and enthusiastic group of volunteers who have a strong sense of pride and passion for Deep Roots' vision and have the competence to manage the organization responsibly.