

EVPP Inclusive Excellence Plan

Virginia Film Festival

DRAFT: March 26, 2021

INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Film Festival is a unit of the Vice Provost for the Arts office. Our mission is

1. To educate and engage audiences of all races, gender identities, physical abilities, LGBTQIA+ status, ages, and socio-economic backgrounds in an open dialogue on the art of film through a five-day annual festival and year-round screenings and events;
2. To foster inclusive conversations between audiences, artists, students, and academics around films and how they relate to the world in which we live; and
3. To support films and filmmakers of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Founded in 1988, the VAFF was endorsed by the Commonwealth's Department of Economic Development and adopted by UVA; the purpose of the Festival was to stimulate economic development by encouraging film production in Virginia and increasing tourism as well as to meld the creative interests of the American film industry with the intellectual resources of the University. Over the past 34 years, our Festival has grown in national significance by engaging UVA's faculty and students; creating a significant impact on the local and regional audiences, developing partnerships with non-profit organizations to create awareness of issues that impact our community, and attracting industry guests and public attention. Our annual festival takes place over 5 days every autumn on the Grounds of the University and in venues across Charlottesville. In addition to screening over 200 films, we annually host over 150 artists and cultural experts who engage with audiences in discussions. These conversations cover a variety of topics, from behind-the-scenes of production to explorations of cultural relevance. Aiming to engage the community in a positive and impactful way, the VAFF's Educational Programs complement the VAFF's mission to bring film and discussion to local audiences of all ages. Through our free youth programs such as the Young Filmmakers Academy, school screenings, and Family Day, the VAFF creates lifelong film lovers while fulfilling the needs of area families.

Beginning in 2016, the VAFF has prioritized inclusive marketing efforts aimed at reaching and inviting all of Charlottesville to engage with and attend our films and events. Each year, we hire an Outreach and Promotions consultant to support and guide our community outreach efforts. We also engage with community and University leaders each year by inviting them to attend targeted outreach events and our Festival at large and then give us feedback afterwards on our strengths and opportunities. We allocate an event and marketing budget specifically to support

advertising in media outlets targeted to local BIPOC communities and events specifically aimed at introducing the Film Festival to local BIPOC communities.

In 2020, the VAFF created Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) goals that are reevaluated each year to guide us in creating a diverse and inclusive program. This effort sets a percentage goal for BIPOC and female identifying guests and directors included in our program and is aimed at ensuring a diversity in race, ethnicity, gender identity, age, physical ability, LGBTQIA+, and socio-economic backgrounds represented in our program.

In early 2021, VAFF initiated the process of creating a DEI committee of 8-10 community and University stakeholders reflecting the diverse cross-section of the community that would meet 3-4 times annually to aid in further connecting with different communities and to bring more voices to the table around marketing and programming.

To develop our Inclusive Excellence plan, we brought together our full-time staff to analyze the DEI work and goals we have developed to date and identified areas for additional focus and improvement based on the EVPP's IE framework dimensions.

ASSESSMENT

Our full time staff members met over zoom for a series of group discussions around the IE assessment and planning guidelines in February and March 2021. Our approach was to first consider the work we've done over the past 5 years around intentionally expanding the diversity of our films and guests and thoughtfully broadening our marketing and community outreach efforts to invite a broader audience to participate in events. We then used the IE framework to begin to identify additional areas of improvement or analysis that were not programming or marketing related that we can begin to develop organization plans and goals around.

One big lesson to come out of our discussions is that a self-assessment involving our full time staff alone is not sufficient. We are a public facing arts organization whose purpose is to deliver film and arts programming to University and local communities. We are all passionate about DEI work and continue to work towards fully integrating DEI into all aspects of our work, we are limited by our own perspectives and our own experience. We must expand our efforts to engage our patrons and stakeholders in an annual assessment process that fully evaluates their experience with our programming and our organization with a DEI lens. We believe such annual assessments will help us to more fully identify our strengths and opportunities for improvement. We also would benefit greatly from soliciting feedback from communities that we are currently

not engaged with or who are not participating in our events. This feedback would help us identify true barriers for entry that limit or prevent participation.

Right now, we are annually identifying and prioritizing our strengths and opportunities largely through internal analysis of ticket sales, unsolicited feedback from our audiences, and anonymous feedback from stakeholder and patron post-Festival surveys. Our methods of analysis do not consistently and sufficiently solicit experiential and cultural climate feedback. Determining the best way to solicit meaningful and honest feedback from outside of our staff will take time, patience, and help from stakeholders and experts outside of our full-time staff. Our hope is that our future DEI committee will be able to support and advise us on how to solicit and interpret feedback from our local community. And furthermore, we consider this report to be just a small part of an overall self-assessment process that we have been on for several years and plan to continue assessing our IE work as a formal part of our organizational operations moving forward.

Beyond this, below is a summary of the key findings that came out of our self-assessment process for each IE dimension:

Access & Success

- While we do a good job intentionally recruiting our interns broadly and inclusively, we tend to recruit our seasonal staff and full time staff internally. We should utilize UVA HR resources and temp services more fully to ensure we are recruiting ALL staff positions inclusively to ensure a diverse applicant pool.
- We also tend to recruit volunteers based on past relationships and through word of mouth. In order to expand the volunteer pool to reach a more diverse cross section of our community, we will explore ways to more broadly and inclusively put out annual calls for volunteers.
- We have no consistency in off boarding across positions. Developing exit interviews and/or a survey that addresses cultural climate and employee safety is a priority.
- We aren't currently requiring training for staff involved in the intern and seasonal staff interview process and would like to begin to do this to ensure a fair and equitable recruitment process.

Climate & Intergroup Relations

- So much of our work is implemented and occurs across venues and events when no full-time staff is present. It's difficult for staff to always know how the VAFF is being represented and experienced when we aren't there. Beyond ensuring that our staff and volunteers are trained and aware of our standards and expectations around customer service and cultural climate, we also want to provide patrons and staff/volunteers with a way to report situations that fail to meet our expressed standards and expectations. We've seen examples of

a public [Code of Conduct](#) at other film festivals and would like to explore how to develop our own that includes resources and ways to report when behavior or actions that run against our Code of Conduct are observed or experienced.

Professional Development, Education, & Scholarship

- We can improve our onboarding process to include information on our DEI commitment and a statement on our culture and guiding principles. We do not currently but would like to begin including [DEI](#), [implicit bias](#), and customer service training and a list of resources and ways to request support in the onboarding of our staff and volunteers.

Community & Partnership

- We realize that we need a better system to track our partnerships across marketing, fundraising, and purchasing. We don't consistently track all partnerships either, as our internal systems are focused on current/active partnerships in a given year without crossover year over year or without fully tracking the partnerships that don't workout or aren't formalized.
- We also don't track our partnerships or sponsorships with a DEI lens.
- We need to continue to work to identify and eliminate barriers to participation in the Festival events and screenings, as well as implement new and expanded ways to introduce and welcome diverse community members to attend and participate in the Festival.

Infrastructure & Investment/Policy & Practice

- We want to make DEI a part of our cultural and environment across all that we do. We will prioritize analyzing and critically evaluating our language and unspoken practices with a DEI lens. This will take time, but some initial revelations as we begin this process have included: we need to expand the definition of our audience in our mission statement and related materials to be broad, inclusive, and better reflect our intentions; we need to seek support to ensure that the language used in our surveys is inclusive and solicits honest feedback.
- We also realize that we are comfortable with the relationships we have and tend to rehire or reuse the same staff, vendors, volunteers, and partners each year. As such, we are limiting the diversity of who we work with. We want to begin to figure how to expand who we work with without ending our existing and valuable relationships.

GOALS, ACTIONS, AND IMPLEMENTATION

| Goals/Objectives | Actions | Outcomes (Data/Metric) | Timeframe(s) | Responsible Office/Position | Funding/Resource Allocation |
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| Increase and expand the diversity of our programs and guests. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop annual percentage goals for BIPOC and women representation in our films and guests. - Incorporate the active tracking of BIPOC and women statistics into our film and guest databases. - Focus on all stages of programming - brainstorming, invitations, and confirmations to ensure DEI goals/efforts are included throughout. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Track data/percentages in real time to ensure goals are being met. - Compare year over year trends to identify areas of improvement. | Ongoing | Director + Program Manager | Costs funded by gift and ticket sales revenue. |
| Include DEI training and resources to staff training and onboarding. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add implicit bias, DEI, and customer service training in onboarding of staff, interns, and volunteers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Track completion of training annually across staff and volunteers. - Include questions on effectiveness of training in offboarding process to determine when/if changes to the required training is needed. | 2021 | Managing Director + Business Manager | Costs funded by gift and ticket sales revenue. |
| Create DEI Committee. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to explore how we can best create a DEI committee to help ensure our program and our promotional efforts offer a balanced representation of gender and race and aim to inclusively | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify and invite 8-10 community and University stakeholders to join a DEI committee. - Host 3 meetings annually to identify and implement DEI goals. | 2021 | All VAFF Staff with Business Manager + Program Manager as staff leads | No anticipated costs beyond staff time. |

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| | engage with all parts of our community. | | | | |
| Ensure equity within our fundraising and solicitation efforts. | - Analyze our fundraising processes to identify ways we can broaden our solicitation efforts to ensure an equitable process of recruiting sponsors and donors each year. | - Track data points around women and minority owned businesses in our recruitment process. - Track data points in our confirmed sponsors and donor list as well. - Compare year over year data points to identify progress and areas of improvement. | Next 3 years: 2021-2023 | Development Director | Costs funded by gift revenue. |
| Ensure broad and inclusive recruitment of volunteers, staff, interns, and Advisory Board Members. | - Analyze our processes to recruit our volunteers, staff, interns, and board members to ensure equity and to diversify our pool. | - Track outreach and recruitment efforts year over year. - Track data points on demographics of our staff, interns, volunteers, and board members year over year to evaluate whether recruitment efforts are affecting a diversity in who is working with us. | Next 3 years: 2021-2023 | Director, Managing Director, Business Manager, and Development Director | Costs funded by gift and ticket sales revenue. |
| Ensure equity within our procurement and purchasing efforts. | - Analyze purchasing efforts and work to identify areas of non-sole source purchasing where we can begin to more broadly and equitably solicit competitive bids. | - Track data points around women and minority owned companies for our vendors hired. | Next 3 years: 2021-2023 | Business Manager + Operations Manager | No anticipated costs beyond staff time |
| Expand publicity and marketing efforts to ensure diverse and inclusive promotions of our events. | - Work with DEI committee and Outreach consultant to identify and engage with diverse media outlets and through community outreach efforts and events. Our goal here is to ensure that our | - Analyze audience survey data points around gender and race year over year to evaluate the effectiveness of our marketing efforts to reach a broader and more diverse cross section of our community. | Next 3 years: 2021-2023 | Managing Director + Publicity & Promotions Contracted and Seasonal Staff | Costs funded by gift and ticket sales revenue. |

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| | patron base reflects the diversity of our local community. | | | | |
| Collaborate with other UVA arts programs to initiate community and resource sharing around DEI goals and actions. | <p>- We feel that there is an untapped opportunity to work across the Arts to share resources and experiences of failures and successes as well as to work collaboratively to identify opportunities for improvement. For all individual arts programs to push forward on their own DEI efforts, especially around engaging University and local communities, could result in siloed work and unnecessary duplication of efforts. We believe that the Arts will be better served working together than apart when it comes to prioritizing and implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion into our units.</p> | - TBD | Next 5 years: 2021-2025 | Director + Managing Director + Business Manager | No anticipated costs beyond staff time. |