This resource provides a flexible guide for planning and hosting a film festival centered around health equity issues. Whether the festival is a large-scale event, a showcase, or small community gathering, the toolkit is designed for organizations and individuals who want to showcase storytelling through film that promotes health and wellness, aims to spark conversations, fosters understanding, and inspires action toward a healthier society for all.

Planning the Festival:

Planning a film festival centered around health equity can be different from other traditional film festivals. It is an opportunity for learning and implementing equitable and collaborative principles and processes. Not only does the festival showcase the artistry in the stories presented; but they also prioritize storytelling as the vehicle to uplift underrepresented voices, initiate conversations, and urge action within the audience. Every aspect from the planning stages to the commencement of the festival must be thoroughly prepared in order to successfully convey the message and instill a call to action into the audience. Here are some important steps to consider in the planning stages of the festival:

Establish Goals and Themes

First, establish the goal(s) and theme(s) of the film festival, thinking about:

> > the key message the audience takes away from the films

> > the call-to-action you want them to adopt

Take inspiration from current events, community values, or from the films themselves.

Form a Planning Committee

A small group can be sufficient to plan and host a film festival. Here are some key positions to consider:

> **Festival Director**: oversees all operations of the film festival from planning to commencement, ensuring timelines are met and tasks are delegated efficiently

> **Communications & Marketing Coordinator**: manages social media, outreach, press relations, and all promotional materials for the film festival

> **Programming & Film Curator**: aids in selecting films and securing licensing

Volunteers and collaborators can also be recruited to fulfill other positions although they are optional:

> **Community Organization and Stakeholder Coordinator**: initiates partnerships with key stakeholders and local community organizations to expand impact

> **Logistics Coordinator**: manages technical setup, run-of-the-show, and staff roles during the film festival

> **Film Selection Team**: collaborates with the Film Curator in selecting films based on set criteria in relation to goals/themes of the festival

Set a Timeline

Using a Gantt Chart can be beneficial to visualize the timeline of the film festival--- whether the process takes a couple of months or weeks. Other sophisticated tools for organization can be used depending on the needs of the planning committee. The following is an example timeline that can be adjusted to a shorter time frame:

> 6-12 months Before the Festival

Assemble Planning Team

Define Goals & Theme

Establish Budget

Select Date & Venue

Develop a Programming Sketch

> 4-6 months Before Festival

Curate Films and Secure Rights

Reach Out to Speakers & Panelists

Start Marketing & Outreach

> 2-3 Months Before the Festival

Finalize Festival Schedule

Launch Registration/Ticketing

Promote Through Multiple Channels

Coordinate Logistics

> 1 Month Before the Festival

Confirm All Details

Engage Media & Community Partners

Prepare Festival Materials

Budgeting and Finances

An enriching film festival can still be hosted regardless of how much or how little funding there is available. To aid in budgeting for the festival, research different funding sources such as grants, sponsorships, donations, or in-kind contributions. Here are some ways to save money and resources, focusing on venue, films, and people:

> Finding free venues such as libraries, recreational centers, parks, etc.

> In-kind support from local businesses/community members for marketing materials, tech equipment, and catering

> Donations to aid in other budgeting items

> Partnering with other film festivals or institutions

> Working with librarians and archivists who can facilitate providing films from their collections

Selecting Films

When deciding on criteria for film selection, consider key points such as:

> alignment to themes

> cinematic quality

> creative contributions to the storytelling of the health equity issues

A rubric can be a useful tool to rank the film selections based on the criteria set by the planning committee. Also consider involving the audience in the film selection process so that the stories presented on the screen are relevant and accurately reflect their lived experiences. Consider conducting audience polls or focus groups to determine:

> what themes/issues are most relevant to them

> what other stories or voices can be included to properly reflect their lived experiences

> what are ways to have the films accessible to the community

Once the films are selected, contact the filmmakers or the organization hosting the film for licensing fees and contracts. Also consider asking for a digital format that will be easy to access on the day of showcasing the film. This will prevent unwanted distractions such as ads or technical difficulties.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

For a film festival centered around health equity to succeed, there must be inclusion of the community and stakeholder engagement to amplify the diverse voices found throughout the films. Involving local organizations and community members early on in the planning stages ensures that the festival and the conversations held will reflect the lived experiences of the communities showcased on film build trust with those attending

the festival. During the festival, there are many ways to involve the community and stakeholders:

> host Q&A sessions with a moderator where the audience can directly share their thoughts and ask questions

> have community members and stakeholder at the discussion panel to highlight their voices and resonate with the audience

> include prompts posted on a board asking the audience what changes are needed to be made and how equity can be achieved through their eyes

Programming and Event Logistics

Once you have selected the films to be showcased, create a programming sketch that displays the run-of-the-show for the duration of the festival. Here is a modifiable template that can be used to structure the program:

> Introduction and Opening Remarks

> Short Films Presentation

> Shorts Q&A session

> Intermission

> Feature Film Presentation

> Q&A session

> Reception

Technology & Platform Considerations

To ensure a smooth transition when showcasing different films sequentially, consider making a playlist of all the films. This will prevent unwanted distractions such as ads or any technical difficulties. Having an IT coordinator on deck can ensure that there are no interruptions or difficulties during the showcasing of the films.

Evaluation

In order to determine whether the goals of the festival are met and the impact on the audience, an evaluation can be conducted to inform future planning and improvements to be made. Creating a simple online or paper survey can be a useful tool to measure the impact of the festival and goal completion. Questions can range across different topics depending on what is important to the individuals/group hosting the festival. Here are some examples:

> Overall impression of the film festival

> Whether the lessons learned are applicable to their daily life

> Whether the audience felt inspire to respond to the call-to-action