

LUNENBURG  
**FOLK HARBOUR  
SOCIETY**

Strategic Business Plan

January 2020

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## Background

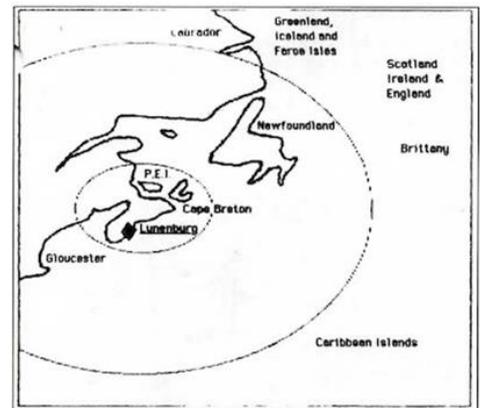
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### Lunenburg as “Head of the Bay” for Folk Music

The individuals who would eventually start the Lunenburg Folk Harbour Society and Festival met with the singular idea of creating a festival similar to that in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Gloucester and Lunenburg had a long history of co-operation and competition, especially in the era of fishing from schooners and dories. This is still played out in an annual series of dory races.

Bill Plaskett’s original thought was that this would become a music festival celebrating and promoting British, Irish, and Scottish folk music. According to Bill, Jim Pittman’s vision was that “there would be a festival where fishing boats from all across the Atlantic would fill the harbour.” Lunenburg would be at the center, not restricted by political boundaries.

John Houston pictured this as a map that he doodled on a napkin in Jim Pittman’s restaurant one day. He showed “...more courses across the oceans than pathways over the land. Folk Harbour can only be found on such a map. It is situated at the head of the bay that is the Great North Atlantic Ocean. People would come to the head of the bay, this little place called Lunenburg, and it would be Folk Harbour. Everybody would be at home there.”



### Formation of the Festival and Society

There were several serious music-lovers who energized the early days of the Society and who created the first Festival in 1986. Ron Kelly, a one-time Hollywood movie maker agreed to chair the newly evolving group of traditional folk music enthusiasts. He led the group through early meetings at which several people agreed to be on the first Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival Committee.

The founding group included Bill Plaskett, Alma Houston and her son John Houston, Dorothy Read, Val Meister, and Ken Matheson. Jim Pittman preferred to be a worker and remained off the organizing committee and Earl Meister took over many site responsibilities such as sound, chairs, tents, and food vendors. They were all filled with energy, willing to do whatever was necessary to make things work out, all the while learning how it was done so that they were able to repeat it the following year and many years to come.

The Certificate of Incorporation from the Province’s Societies Act for the Lunenburg Folk Harbour Society (LFHS) was signed on May 30, 1986. The following individuals formed the first Lunenburg Folk Harbour Society Board of Directors: Bill Plaskett, President; John Houston, Vice President, Rosemary Richards, Treasurer; Earl Meister, Secretary. The Festival Committee was Chaired by Ken Matheson, who was a witness to the Certificate of Incorporation. Ken chaired the first 10 Festivals and today’s Ken Matheson Program for local performers is named in his honour. He was assisted in the early years by volunteers such as: Program Committee: Val Meister and John Houston; Site: Chris Anderson and Earl Meister; Finance: The Houstons, Ken Matheson and Rosemary Richards; Fundraising: The Houstons and Roger Pike.

## Artistic Vision

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To share traditional and contemporary folk music highlighting the culture and history of Nova Scotia and other North Atlantic regions through music, dance, and other forms of artistic expression presented through events and educational experiences which celebrates the ever-changing nature of traditional music.

## Mission

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The Lunenburg Folk Harbour Society is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit, charitable, family-focused community-based organization, which strives to celebrate the joy of traditional and contemporary folk music, dance, and oral history through an annual Festival and other events throughout the year. The mandate of the Lunenburg Folk Harbour Society is to promote the preservation and continuation of traditional folk music from a diverse range of cultures and regions, through an emphasis on acoustic instrumentation and acapella singing. The Society strives to encourage the writing and performance of current and timely folk music that contributes to the evolutionary nature of an international folk tradition.

## Value Proposition

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It is our goal to provide experiences that change people's lives. We present programs for education and entertainment. Some are ticketed events; others are offered to the community at no cost to participants.

We believe in these values; they guide our decisions and describe how we interact with those we serve:

1. Honouring artistic and cultural diversity
2. Respecting traditions
3. Striving for innovation
4. Creating family-oriented spaces and events
5. Supporting fellow not-for-profit local organizations and societies
6. Being mindful of our impact on our environment

## What We Do

Ticketed events include:

1. A preeminent folk music festival, the **Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival (LFHF)** began in 1986 and has been presented annually since then. It is now the longest-running music festival in Nova Scotia and is recognized as one of the top folk festivals in Canada.
2. Spring and Fall concert series, the **Lunenburg Folk Harbour Society** began offering concert off-Festival in October 2006 to provide entertainment options for the residents of Lunenburg and surrounding communities.
3. The **Lunenburg Folk Harbour Society** began running an annual fundraising event (Folk Fiesta!) in the winter of 2004 as a competition for the last spot on the Festival stage. It is now used as a showcase for our up-coming Festival.

We currently offer the following free community programs at no cost to participants:

1. Free bandstand performances during Festival
2. Free morning workshops during Festival
3. Summer concert series at the Heritage Bandstand every Sunday from mid-June to Mid-September
4. Summer concert series in partnership with the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic – Wednesdays on the Wharf
5. Young Folks concert presented by and for young folk musicians
6. Greening program educating the community about waste processing and the Blue W program
7. Ken Matheson Program highlighting emerging local artists
8. Jim Pittman Scholarships for music students in grades 4-12

### What Makes Us Unique

1. The town of Lunenburg (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) is our venue. Visitors are within walking distance of world-class restaurants, Inns, art galleries, and museums. The *Bluenose II* and Lunenburg Harbour provide the backdrop for our performances.
2. All of our venues are small, intimate and historic. Acoustically rich historic buildings in a natural setting allow us to provide (relatively comfortable) seating and to have dry back-up venues in case of rain.
3. We are small. Though over Festival weekend we accommodate on average 3,500 patrons our venues are small (accommodating 100s not 1,000s of patrons). This makes for intimacy and fosters interaction with the performers. One of the features often mentioned by audiences is that they can actually run into and talk to performers around town. Performers stay in private homes.
4. Performers love coming to LFHF, so they give us their very best performances. We treat them well with our extraordinary performer services and provide them intimate venues in which to interact with the audience. One of our key areas of concentration, from the beginning, has been sound quality.
5. We do not serve alcohol at our main Festival venues. This makes for a comfortable environment for patrons of all ages and a satisfying experience for performers who interact with the attentive audience. We've always reached out to families, and often have been visited by families of several generations.
6. We support youth and the community. We offer free performances for the community throughout the Festival and special workshops and stages for youth. Year-round programs include scholarships and free concerts.
7. We believe in sustainability and work to protect our environment so future generations can continue to thrive and enjoy our traditions.
8. We are more than a festival. We provide educational opportunities and entertainment for Lunenburg and the South Shore year-round.
9. Our audience is loyal. Hundreds of people return year after year. The average Festival-goer has attended at least three times with 14% having attended over 20 times. People return and recognize each other. The Festival is "old home week" for many people.
10. We provide educational and historical themed pre-Festival conferences, each year. These conferences, with renowned and authoritative speakers, provide detailed information vital to the perpetuation of genre-specific music.

### Benefits to Our Communities

1. To Festival and concert patrons we offer:
  - A unique, intimate, high-quality festival experience
  - The feeling of being appreciated

- Exposure to new and diverse performers and traditions
- 2. To our performers we offer:
  - An attentive, engaged audience
  - Intimate venues with high-quality sound
  - Main stage exposure for emerging artists
  - The opportunity to interact and collaborate with other artists
  - An investment of over \$140,000 in artist fees and merchandise sales in the past year
- 3. To the Local businesses in Lunenburg and surrounding area we offer:
  - A captured clientele which generates approximately \$1,200,000 in incremental spending with local businesses throughout the year
  - Advertising and sponsorship opportunities
- 4. To the Residents of the South Shore and surrounding area of Nova Scotia we offer:
  - Opportunities for education and entertainment year-round
  - Opportunities to volunteer, learn new skills, and make new friends
- 5. To Local music teachers and music students we offer:
  - Financial support for music lessons through scholarships
  - Opportunities to see and interact with professional artists
  - Exposure to world-class performances
- 6. To our sponsors we offer:
  - Positive exposure for their brand to a targeted audience

## Long Term Goals

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Our long-term goals are as follows:

1. Sustain and expand our reputation as a preeminent international folk festival and presenter of world-class folk music.
2. Be recognized as a leader and key contributor in the business and arts community in Lunenburg and help Lunenburg become recognized as a “music centre” and international tourist destination for maritime cultural experiences.
3. Reduce reliance on ticket sales as our major revenue stream; increase planned contributions by individuals and corporations.
4. Seek endowments, foundations, and long-term sponsors to help fund our fixed expenses.
5. Enhance the capabilities of our premier performance venue, the historic Lunenburg Opera House to include office space, hospitality space, more washrooms, and more rental capabilities.
6. Hire full-time paid administration, bookkeeping, and events planning staff.

## 2020-21 – Short-Term Goals and Objectives

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Our Short-Term Goals and Objectives are as follow:

1. Partner with *Bluenose 100*, a local group organizing the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Bluenose* for the summer of 2021, to have several themed events throughout the year.
2. Partner with fellow not-for-profits in Lunenburg (e.g. LAMP, Doc Fest, South Shore Players, etc.) to

- secure funding for capital additions to the Lunenburg Opera House, sound equipment, lighting equipment, audio-visual equipment, staging, etc.
3. Present our Festival, maximizing the opportunity for international exposure and enhanced visitor experiences.
  4. Continue our Fall and Spring Concert Series with a target of funding only 40% of costs through ticket sales with the remainder coming from sponsors and donors. Expand, where possible, the number of concerts in each series.
  5. Continue the Bandstand Summer Series as a community service. Expand, where possible, the number of concerts and the partners to these concerts.
  6. Continue the partnership with the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic, offering a Summer Series of Concerts, Wednesdays on the Wharf.
  7. Begin the shift away from reliance on ticket sales and to planning individual contributions as revenue sources.
  8. Begin development of a succession plan for key leadership positions, to include all Executive positions as well as chairs of Site, Program, Performer Services, and Fundraising.
  9. Partner with Waterfront Development to maximize LFHF exposure.
  10. Partner with a tour operator to offer packages from Halifax and/or the Valley that includes transportation and Festival/concert events.
  11. Partner with local businesses to offer concert weekend packages, i.e. accommodation, meal(s), tickets.
  12. Work with other local organizations to expand greening initiatives beyond the festival.
  13. Launch a mentorship program for young musicians.

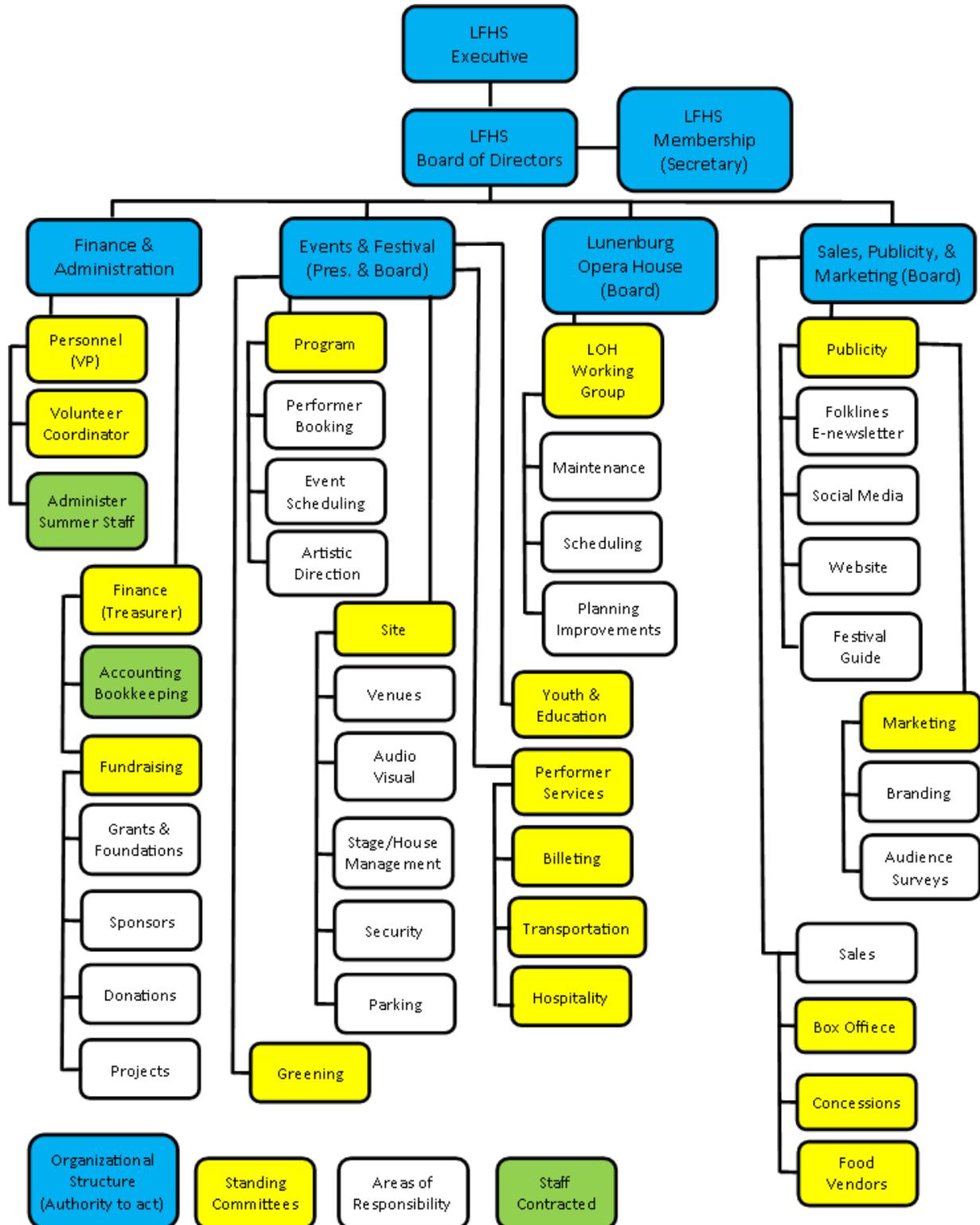
## **Organizational Structure**

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The Organizational Chart below gives the structure and lines of responsibility of the Lunenburg Folk Harbour Society. The Society is a registered, volunteer-run, not-for-profit, charitable society. Each Standing Committee answers to the Board of Directors who in turn answer to the Membership.

# LUNENBURG FOLK HARBOUR SOCIETY

Organizational Chart with lines of Responsibilities



## SWOT Analysis

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A thorough Strengths – Weaknesses – Opportunities – Threats (SWOT) Analysis has been conducted in the last three years. This analysis has been updated recently to make its implications more relevant.

### Strengths

1. Location, location, location (the UNESCO World Heritage site with an abundance of perfect venues for the society's use)
2. Owning a premiere venue in the center of Lunenburg
3. Longevity, maturity, reputation
4. Strong desire to evolve
5. Strong programming, both on and off stages
6. Engaged in the community and strong community involvement
7. Offer value to all stakeholders
8. Diverse volunteer corps
9. Strong foundation in entertainment industry, with a professional approach and appearance

### Weaknesses

1. Heavy reliance on volunteers for leadership; no dedicated resources to key executive functions such as fundraising
2. Average age of existing audience is 50+
3. Struggling to find volunteers willing to take on leadership roles, in particular younger members
4. Difficulty reaching new and younger audiences
5. Need new and more funding sources (e.g. lack of bigger sponsors, lack of multi-year contracts, need for sustainable financial model, need to develop endowments, etc.)

### Opportunities

1. *Bluenose 100*, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Bluenose* taking place in 2021 allows for a strategic partnership for programming
2. Collaboration/partnerships with other Lunenburg organizations to maximize capital funding for the Lunenburg Opera House
3. Collaboration/partnerships with other Lunenburg organizations to maximize event scheduling and programming throughout the coming years
4. Engagement with music students and music teachers, to help expand audience and volunteer base amongst younger members
5. Continue to make programming information more readily available and user-friendly

### Threats

1. Competition for audience due to the large number of arts organizations in Lunenburg
2. Controlling expenses (e.g. site costs, publicity costs, performer fees, etc.)
3. Shortage of support facilities (e.g. hotels, restaurants, etc.)

Appendix A - 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 Operating Budgets Comparison to 2018/2019  
Actuals

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