



**CAFKA Strategic Plan
2017 – 2020**

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

CAFKA has its origins in 1996 as a city-run annual visual arts festival in Kitchener called Artworks. It began as a two-day event held at Kitchener City Hall and consisted of an art sale, cultural information exchange and six art exhibits. The objective was to encourage the public to participate and see “art being made.”

By 2001 the festival had changed its name to CAFKA, grown to 17 projects staged over nine days, and expanded its base to include Kitchener City Hall and environs. In February of 2005 CAFKA incorporated as a separate non-profit organization and hired a full-time Artistic Director and moved to a biennial festival format. The festival is presented in June every second year (the most recent festival was produced in June 2016) with supplementary public programming between festivals.

CAFKA operates on the principles of an artist-run organization and is governed by a Board of Directors representing artists and other community leaders. Artistic direction is provided the Program Committee, a sub-committee of the Board of Directors, comprised of artist members of the Board, CAFKA staff, artists and art professionals from the community.

ARTISTIC PROGRAM

CAFKA presents a biennial program of art in Kitchener and surrounding communities. CAFKA commissions innovative artistic projects and interactive programming that engage the public and diverse audiences and that respond to the specific features of the local urban landscape and culture. The 2016 festival included a total of 30 installations, performances, projections and interventions involving collaborations with our festival partner Open Ears Festival of Music and Sound, and our curatorial partners University of Waterloo Art Gallery, Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery, Critical Media Lab, Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery, and Idea Exchange Art and Design.

In addition to the biennial exhibition, CAFKA presents a number of lectures and public programs in the “off-festival” years as a means of maintaining profile, identifying and engaging with potential volunteers, members and sponsors and generating community interest in contemporary art in public spaces.

MISSION

CAFKA brings thought-provoking art to our public spaces in order to inspire, engage and enrich community life.

VALUES

PUBLIC ART

Public space is CAFKA's site, subject, and inspiration

ARTISTIC QUALITY

CAFKA is committed to working with professional artists

COMMUNICATION

CAFKA believes in free and open artistic expression

COLLABORATION

CAFKA actively collaborates with artists and cultural organizations in the community

ORIGINALITY

CAFKA works with and encourages artists who embrace original ideas and risk taking

COMMUNITY

CAFKA is supported by open, curious, and passionate people who share respect for each other and a love for their community.

STRATEGIC GOALS

GOAL 1: MAINTAIN HIGH QUALITY ARTISTIC PROGRAM

The quality of CAFKA’s festival programming is recognized as a core strength of the organization by funders, Board of Directors, community members and the public alike. The Program Committee and the Executive Director are able to identify, attract and present noteworthy professional artists. Commissioned artists value their participation in CAFKA as an opportunity to develop and showcase their work, and for the strong technical and logistical support that CAFKA provides. This plan builds upon CAFKA’s artistic success by introducing a number of actions that will provide a more stable foundation for the artistic program in the future.

The Board has noted the need for a more structured programming model that provides a balance between festival-year programming and off-year programming. A regular and consistent artistic program will provide stability to operational scheduling such as fundraising initiatives, marketing plans, and human resource requirements. What this programming model will look like (in terms of frequency, type of activity, etc.) will be decided in early 2017. Once this is established, the Board, Committees and staff can layer on actions that support and enhance the artistic program.

Objective	Action	2017	2018	2019	2020	Responsibility
Organizational clarity	Develop a comprehensive programming model with two-year structure and identify revenue sources	✓				Board
	Create and maintain a “cadence of deliverables” or Gantt chart of activities including programming, events, marketing plan, funding deadlines etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	Program Committee
	Modest off year programming commences 2017 with full implementation 2019	✓		✓		Program Committee

GOAL 2 : IMPROVE EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

It is impossible to accurately quantify either the size of the audience at or the impact of any free festival in the public domain. Most measures are anecdotal. The advent of social media does provide some measures as the number of Facebook posts or Tweets provides an indication of community engagement. By these measures, CAFKA 2016 demonstrated a significant increase in impact through its social media presence made possible in large part through the active promotion by CAFKA volunteers, interns and contract employees. The traditional methods of public communication have been less successful as in 2016 the local media provided limited coverage of the festival. The opportunity for CAFKA in its external communication is therefore to optimize free marketing and communications vehicles such as social media, and maintain momentum in the off-year.

There is the opportunity to tell the CAFKA story better through improvements in the event guide, website and other marketing and communications materials. A comprehensive marketing and communications plan that aligns with the new programming model will be an important first step. These materials can be adapted to serve as key talking points with the local city and regional governments who need to be constantly reminded about the important role that CAFKA plays in building pride of place and enhancing the quality of life for residents.

Equally important is the opportunity to strengthen existing, and constantly seek new partnerships be they for programming, marketing or revenue generation. CAFKA is already viewed as a leader in the artistic community and this position can be leveraged resulting in year-round awareness of CAFKA that mitigates the “only there every two years” concern.

Objective	Action	2017	2018	2019	2020	Responsibility
Heightened public awareness and attendance	Develop and continually refine a marketing and communications plan that generates increased community engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓	Marketing Committee
	Increased and coordinated advocacy with municipal politicians	✓	✓	✓	✓	Fundraising Committee
	Increase the collaboration and cross-marketing with other regional events with a similar audience demographic	✓	✓	✓	✓	Marketing Committee
Increased presence in cultural sector	Strengthen alliance with other organizations presenting public art events	✓				Program Committee
	Consider more off-year programming partnerships with other cultural organizations		✓		✓	Program Committee
	Develop and implement a systematic process by which Board and staff are visible and promote CAFKA at local cultural events	✓				Board

GOAL 3: FINANCIAL SECURITY

As a free public art festival CAFKA has minimal opportunity for earned revenue, leaving the organization highly dependent upon government and foundation grants, corporate sponsorship and individual giving. CAFKA produced a successful festival in 2016 and expects to balance the books for the 2015/16 fiscal year. While this is undoubtedly good news, CAFKA’s financial foundation continues to be fragile. The loss of one or two of their core funding sources would have a significant impact on operations.

The organization has an energetic Board with community connections and fundraising skills, committed to developing and implementing a plan to broaden the base of CAFKA’s private sector support. The region is full of established and incoming creative entrepreneurs who should be natural allies and partners for programming, financial support and volunteers. The region’s cultural organizations have had difficulty making connections with these creative enterprises, however CAFKA has the determination and the contacts to make inroads with this sector.

The programming model being proposed, with a robust festival and a regular schedule of off-year activities, and attendant education and outreach, requires at least two full time staff. It is imperative that funds be secured to hire a second administrator with skills that complement those of the Executive Director.

Objective	Action	2017	2018	2019	2020	Responsibility
Increased private sector revenue	Establish and implement a plan to identify, secure, maintain and acknowledge both existing and potential private sector prospects and foundations	✓	✓	✓	✓	Fundraising Committee
	Create a compelling and dynamic case for support for biennial and off-years	✓	✓	✓	✓	Fundraising Committee
Financial stability	Implement quarterly financial reporting to the Board	✓				Finance Committee
	Create and implement a sustainability plan that incorporates research on sustainability at similar organizations, and a second full time equivalent.	✓	✓			Finance Committee

GOAL 4 : OPTIMAL USE OF VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

The Board of Directors typically has 11 or 12 members. As an artist-run centre, 50% of the Board must be artists, the balance can be drawn from the arts sector or the broader community. The current Board is very enthusiastic and brings a broad range of skills including fundraising and marketing from a variety of business and cultural sectors. It is a strong start. What are required are more structure, clear Terms of Reference, and clear reporting relationships to ensure clear and transparent internal communications that optimize existing resources.

Volunteers (other than the Board) are vital to CAFKA’s ability to produce the festival. They provide a wide range of support services such as committee membership, fundraising, educational and program support. The ad hoc Volunteer Committee for the 2016 biennial produced a comprehensive report that identified many strategies to improve the volunteer’s experience, streamline volunteer management, and make most efficient use of staff and volunteer time and energy.

Objective	Action	2017	2018	2019	2020	Responsibility
Board skills wisely employed	Clarify roles and responsibilities for the Executive positions	✓				Board/Executive Committee
	Establish clear Terms of Reference for all Committees that reflect the key directions of this Strategic Plan	✓				Board/Executive Committee
	Clarify and implement communication channels between Committees and the Board	✓	✓	✓	✓	Board/Executive Committee
Active and engaged volunteer pool	Review recommendations from the ad-hoc Volunteer Committee Post-Biennial Review (July, 2016) and determine implementation plan.	✓				Board
	Recruit, train and support volunteers throughout the year for year-round activities.		✓			Volunteer Committee
	Establish a volunteer management structure that meets the needs of new programming model		✓			Volunteer Committee