



Strategic Development Report 2022
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A. Executive Summary

The Halifax Pride Society is a non-profit whose main operations center around an annual 11-day festival in the Halifax Regional Municipality for the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Community members are overwhelmingly appreciative of Halifax Pride's work and responsiveness to community feedback. At the same time, Halifax Pride has reached the capacity of the size and quality of festival it can produce with its current level of funding. Many of the challenges it faces are caused by a lack of financial and human resources that are deeply intertwined; human resources are required to procure financial resources via grant applications, outreach to sponsors, and fundraising, and financial resources are required to hire and manage human resources. Halifax Pride struggles to find government funding to support its operations, and the current levels of sponsorship and fundraising are not sufficient to produce a high quality festival with adequate staffing and compensation. The absence of key management skills within the staff and Board makes day-to-day operations and resource management challenging. These challenges are compounded by inconsistent leadership and engagement from the Board of Directors.

This report provides ten strategic recommendations to help Halifax Pride develop its organizational capacity. Updating the expectations and responsibilities of the Board, coupled with cultivating its leadership capacity through training and onboarding new Board members with the required skills, will create a strong foundation on which Halifax Pride can build. The development of committees led by Board members with experience in human resource management, fundraising/development, and marketing/promotion is necessary for organizational health and growth. Halifax Pride would benefit greatly from the leadership of experienced individuals for the creation of a fundraising and marketing strategy, as well as an audit of current HR practices. The solidification of a financial management system under the guidance of the Treasurer should also be a priority. Since engaged volunteers from the community are integral to the function of the festival, Halifax Pride should focus on volunteer well-being and create improved systems for community engagement and feedback. A continued commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels of the organization will help Halifax Pride ensure that the festival is representative of the population it serves. Lastly, a complete "how-to" guide for all staff roles and processes should be created in order to allow the continuity of the organization should there be staff turnover.

B. Background

The Halifax Pride Society ("Halifax Pride" or "the Society") is a non-profit whose main operations center around an annual 11-day festival in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) for the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Events are geared towards community culture and interests, including music, art, activism, comedy, physical activities, panels, identity-based gatherings, and more. Halifax Pride currently has a nine-person board and two full-time staff, including the Executive Director (ED), Adam, and an Operations Lead. Over the past few years Halifax Pride has shifted its focus to prioritize QTBIPOC leadership, community and events. Halifax Pride's Aim, Purpose, and Guiding Principles are outlined as follows:

AIM: An equitable society free from all forms of oppression.

PURPOSE: To create spaces for persons of diverse sexual and gender identities to come together and flourish.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Community: a sense of belonging and connection.

Self-expression: being one's true authentic self without fear or judgment.

Growth: continually unlearning oppressive social constructs and structures to reimagine and rebuild a system that will champion all voices.

C. Scope and Purpose

This report represents the first step towards the creation of a multi-year strategic plan for Halifax Pride. This document is not a substitute for a strategic plan, which should be developed in close and continuous collaboration with Halifax Pride's leadership and community members. In general, there are four questions that must be answered in order to create a strategic plan:

1. Where are we at the moment?
2. Where do we want to go?
3. How can we get there?
4. How will we know if we got there?

The purpose of this report is to answer the question "Where are we at the moment?" through observation of Halifax Pride's operations and the solicitation of feedback through formal and informal interviews with Halifax Pride Board members, staff, volunteers, and community members. Feedback has been anonymized to enable participants to speak freely about their experiences and gain the most useful feedback possible. The singular "they" has been used to support anonymity of feedback. Where relevant, distinctions have been made between the feedback of staff, volunteers, and Board members. Any individuals mentioned by name were contacted to ensure that they were comfortable being identified in this report.

Based on feedback and observation I have identified ten strategic recommendations that, if implemented, would promote organizational development and help Halifax Pride to better support the community they serve. Each section is broken down into the recommendation, feedback received, and concrete action items that would help Halifax Pride to implement the given recommendation. Recommendations are based on research, basic business principles, and my own non-profit leadership experience.

D. Positive Feedback

It is important to acknowledge that while this report is focused on areas for improvement, *the feedback given by all stakeholders was overwhelmingly grounded in appreciation for the work that*

Halifax Pride is doing in the community. I heard time and time again that people view Halifax Pride as a community-focused Pride, and they see the work that has been done over the past few years to make it more equitable and accessible. Volunteers and staff overwhelmingly indicated that they would work with Halifax Pride again in the future.

Here is a brief overview of the positive feedback received:

- Halifax Pride holds space for others in the community who might need our loud voice;
- Halifax Pride puts community first in an authentic and meaningful way;
- Their heart is in the right place, and that's special. They are working to be responsive to community wishes. For example, when they were called out in the accessibility realm, people jumped on it quickly to make changes;
- Halifax Pride tries to support marginalized communities within our community. I see a lot of orgs not even trying to support disabled and low income people. This has become a strong focus in the last few years which is nice to see;
- Halifax Pride is a grassroots festival that is growing. In comparison to some bigger Prides, they balance the community and corporate aspects, and prioritize community more than other Prides;
- Halifax Pride listens to community feedback. Pride is good at taking constructive criticism and doing their best to implement changes, and good at making sure guests are comfortable (i.e. offering chairs to folks waiting in line for a long time);
- Halifax Pride has made strides towards inclusion by adding sober spaces, active listeners, and un-toxicated queers. They are actively trying to do better, make it affordable, and have Indigenous events.

E. Findings & Recommendations

1. Update Expectations for the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors serves a critical role in guiding the organization. I found that there is a mismatch between the current expectations for Board members and what is required for the healthy function of the Society. While there are onboarding documents outlining responsibilities and expectations of Board members, inconsistency in Board members' engagement and understanding of their responsibilities indicates that the information is not being conveyed clearly. At the same time, the expectations themselves should be updated; since the Board transitioned from a Working Board to a Governance Board, roles have not been clearly defined. Although a Governance Board should not be involved in the day-to-day operations of the organization, it should provide leadership on high-level strategy, fundraising, partnerships, and oversight of the Executive Director. I recommend a re-assessment of the role of all Board members as it relates to guidance and ongoing institutional support, as well as more clear job descriptions for specific roles (Chair, Vice-chair, Fundraising chair, etc.) An assessment of guiding policies and the creation of an accountability process for board members who do not fulfill their responsibilities will set a framework that can be followed should this be a concern in the future. Since all stakeholders identified communication as an issue, it would

benefit Halifax Pride to have an honest conversation between staff and Board members about the gaps in communication and to set new standards of communication as a group.

Feedback:

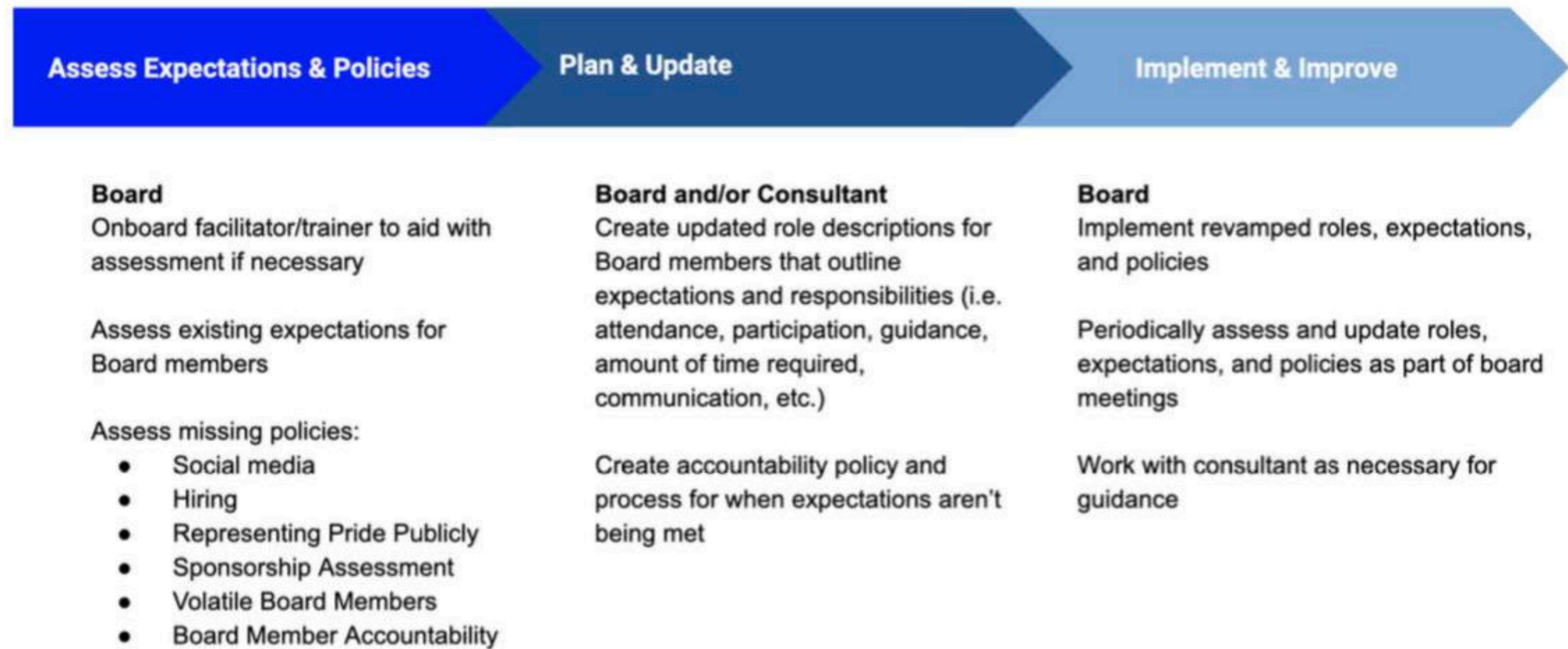
- Board Engagement:** Several Board members reported that Board members do not prepare for Board meetings by reading over the Executive Director's report ahead of time. One Board member suggested that it is important for Adam to continue presenting his report at meetings because of this reality. Adam expressed concern that Board members do not read his reports or ask him questions about his plans or activities. When asked why people do not read the report, one Board member responded that the Governance Board is "hands off"; people are busy and less engaged than they once were. Another Board member who has been on other boards reported that other boards were more involved and committed to participating in meetings and attending events. It was reported that not all Board members voice their opinions during board meetings, and that there are no processes in place to ensure that everyone participates. This has led to some Board members speaking up more than others. One Board member felt that the Board as a whole lacked accountability to their own recommendations; that a recommendation is made and then a lack of follow-through results in nothing happening.
- Policies:** Board members indicated that there were several policies missing that would support the healthy function of the Society. Specific policies that were mentioned were: social media policy, hiring policy, policy on representing Halifax Pride in a public setting, volatile Board members policy, policy on assessing sponsors to avoid pinkwashing¹, and policy on nominating and interviewing prospective Board members. I observed that there was no policy holding Board members accountable to their responsibilities/deliverables aside from one related to absenteeism.
- Communication:** A lack of clear communication within the Board and between staff and the Board was a frequently cited issue by all stakeholders. Some Board members expressed that they would like a way to communicate with each other between Board meetings, such as through a Slack channel, to make sure they all have the same information. It was indicated that the board has done Slack training and has been set up with accounts, but does not actively use Slack to communicate. Several Board members expressed that they wanted better communication between the Board and staff, and that they are not aware of what staff are doing day to day. One Board member expressed that there were some oversights during the festival that could have been avoided if the appropriate person had been consulted during decision-making.

I observed that there are varying degrees of engagement on the Board of Halifax Pride. Some Board members are more committed to attending events, participating in meetings, and leading their committees than others. I observed that several committee folders were empty. I saw that Board member burnout has affected different peoples' ability to participate as much as they would like. It

¹ Pinkwashing: The promotion of the gay-friendliness of a corporate or political entity in an attempt to downplay or soften aspects of it considered negative (Wikipedia)

was clear to me that Board members have the desire to make a positive impact on Halifax Pride, but that this was made more challenging by a lack of clarity around roles and expectations.

Action Items:



2. Build the Leadership Capacity of the Board

Board members and staff expressed the desire for the Board to provide stronger leadership and articulate a clear vision moving forward. Given that being community-oriented is one of Halifax Pride's strengths, it is evident that being engaged with the 2SLGBTQ+ community is a prerequisite for Board membership. Possessing leadership skills or having the willingness to invest in cultivating these skills should be a requirement for membership in the Board's leadership team. It is important that Board members have the skills and confidence to guide the organization as well as the expertise to fill in organizational gaps. Being community-minded and having a specific skill set (i.e. HR management) are not mutually exclusive, and I recommend that Halifax Pride focus on broadening the types of guidance and oversight the Board can provide by encouraging community members with specific skills to run for the Board. It is important to note that this should not be at the expense of the diversity of the Board; because of systemic oppression, formal education is less available to 2SQTBIPOC, poor, or other marginalized members of the queer community. Expertise gained through work experience, community experience, lived experience or formal education should be valued when assessing who may be a good fit for the Board so that this recommendation does not result in disproportionate representation of privileged populations (white, cis, upperclass, etc.) With the upcoming election in mind, I suggest that Halifax Pride take steps towards onboarding new Board members with knowledge and/or experience in the following areas:

- Human Resources Management
- Marketing, Promotion, Partnerships
- Fundraising, Development

- Leadership (nonprofit leadership an asset)

One way to encourage people with specific skill sets to run for the Board is to clearly promote that Halifax Pride is seeking new Board members to lead specific committees, along with different examples of the types of experience or knowledge that are essential for the role. Networking and reaching out to relevant 2SLGBTQ+ professional associations would further increase the likelihood of finding someone with the desired skills. Connecting with professional associations serves a secondary goal; for certain areas of expertise it could be useful to hire an external trainer to train existing Board members, strengthening the Board and serving as a way for members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community to gain free professional development in the process. I also recommend the creation of a Board Development committee that does year-round outreach to potential future Board members. The Board of Halifax Pride is already passionate and community minded, and I believe that with additional support it could be more organized and effective.

Feedback:

- **Leadership & Guidance:** The Board, staff, and Adam felt that too much is falling on Adam's shoulders and that stronger Board leadership is necessary. Board members expressed that more collaboration and staffing is needed so Adam can share the workload and delegate. Board members expressed that it sometimes feels like Adam is running Halifax Pride and they are in the background. One Board member noted that the Board should strategize and delegate tasks to the staff, and it was currently the other way around. Board members and staff expressed concern that Adam being the point person for so many facets of the organization is not sustainable and leads to oversight because one person can only do so much. Some felt that the Board was not functional because it does not give enough oversight or guidance. When asked what aspects of board meetings could be improved, the Chair responded that she could not think of any potential changes and had never reflected on it. Several Board members noted that they did not feel there was currently strong leadership on the Board.
- **New Board Member Traits and Skills:** When Board members were asked what types of characteristics and skill sets should be prioritized in onboarding new Board members, there was consensus that new Board members must be community minded. Desirable traits that were highlighted were organization, flexibility, strong communication, leadership skills, thoughtfulness, financial literacy, and efficiency. Multiple Board members brought up that new Board members should have the time and interest in taking on additional tasks for Halifax Pride while being mindful of their time and energy so they do not burn out. One Board member believed that an open mind is more important than skills, and whoever joins the Board should be open to exploring new solutions and not fall back on "this is the way we've always done it". One Board member asked, "How do we ensure that the Board is diverse in background but also skills?" They felt that something is sacrificed when a Chair with no experience is elected, and that there is an abundance of skill on the Board that is not being mobilized well. Another Board member noted that different individuals bring unique skills to the organization, but sometimes when the person leaves the momentum stops. One example given was that there used to be a Board member who was research savvy and skilled at surveys and reporting, and

their initiatives ended as soon as they left the Board. Board members universally reported that they would like to see another diverse Board with continued prioritization of QTBIPOC, trans, nonbinary, and disabled community members. Several Board members suggested that the process for onboarding new Board members should start earlier to ensure there is a good fit, and that there should be a more intentional way to nominate new additions to the Board.

Action Items:



3. Conduct a Formal Review of HR Practices & Build HR Capacity

The reality is that human resources—their labour and their commitment—are Halifax Pride’s greatest asset and Halifax Pride does not have anyone on staff or on the Board who specializes in managing HR. In my experience, the HR problems described (lack of clarity around roles, insufficient pay and poor working conditions) are characteristic of organizations that are under-resourced and inexperienced with HR management; essentially, organizations trying to do too much with too little. This is not to excuse labour code violations, but it is helpful to identify the root cause in order to create a more positive and labour code compliant work environment for staff members. I strongly recommend that Halifax Pride prioritize improving working conditions for staff and ensure compliance with Nova Scotia labour code. In order to do so, I recommend actively recruiting a Board member with HR management experience and/or hiring an external HR professional to do an audit of practices and policies, train management, and improve processes. In the meantime, managing staff should review the the Nova Scotia labour code rules around overtime pay, periods of rest, and rest and eating breaks (see link in Appendix), and have a discussion with staff to allow them to vent their concerns and give suggestions.

Feedback:

Staff were vocal about Pride's shortcomings when it comes to HR-related issues across four main areas: Hiring Practices, Compensation, Quality of Supervision and Communication, and Working Conditions.

- **Hiring Practices:** Adam is often the only person involved in the interviewing and hiring process for staff. Board members would like more collaboration and input during the hiring process, supported by a clear policy on who is in the room for interviews for staff or Board members. At the same time, Adam expressed that the one interview that was going to be done in collaboration with the board was delayed by a month due to lack of Board availability, and often it is necessary to work quickly in order to hire staff in a short period of time.
- **Compensation:** A common thread from staff members was that the compensation is not adequate for the work performed, and that the practice of working fewer hours in the weeks leading up to the festival in order to work overtime during the festival was ineffective and unfair.
 - Specifically, it was reported that staff are paid for 35 hours of work per week with the understanding that they will work fewer hours in the weeks leading up to the festival to account for the additional hours that they work during the festival. Several staff members reported working 16-20 hours per day multiple days in a row, and noted that they would have felt more adequately compensated if they had received overtime pay. Additionally, staff reported that it was not always possible to work fewer hours leading up to the festival, so they ultimately worked more hours than outlined in their contract.
 - Several staff felt that Halifax Pride had an unwillingness and/or inability to pay people a living wage. One staff person believed that Halifax Pride thought they were paying a living wage, but the reality is that \$15 per hour is not enough to eat and live. One staff member said that they were less likely to promote Halifax Pride as a workplace for their peers knowing that they would be asked to do unpaid work. Another staff member felt that they were making more money than they should be based on the number of hours of work, and it made them question the distribution of the money among the staff knowing how little other staff were being paid. Discussions with Adam revealed to me that he recognizes the value and importance of staff contributions and would like to pay staff more, and he finds himself in a difficult situation when it comes to balancing limited funding with community expectations for the festival.
- **Quality of Supervision & Communication:** Staff that had prior experience with Pride expressed that they felt equipped to do their jobs, while those who were new to Pride or new to their role struggled.
 - Several staff expressed that there was a lack of communication and clarity on what they should be doing, and that they did not feel that asking Adam a concrete question resulted in a clear answer. One staff member reported that there was not much

guidance provided, and Adam expected them to know what to do because they had been an employee before even if they were in a new role. Some staff felt that Adam did not delegate tasks and took on too much, which resulted in stressful situations that could have been avoided if the task had been delegated from the outset. One staff member witnessed Fiona yelling at other staff and volunteers during stressful moments.

- **Working Conditions:** Staff felt that there was a lack of support during the festival. One staff person acknowledged that the level of support is much better than a couple of years ago because now there is a bigger team, but having a bigger team means that even more support is needed.
 - Staff reported that during the festival it was so busy that they often went without a break or food for an extended period of time. They indicated that having very clearly structured breaks that are respected would be helpful. Staff reported sleep deprivation caused by working 16-20 hour days, finishing a shift at 3:30AM and starting the next shift at 7:00AM. One staff member reported that they were so exhausted that they did not feel safe to drive home after their shifts and decided to sleep in their car. Another staff person reported that sleep deprivation led to tensions and frustrations within the team because everyone was exhausted, and that it made it difficult to interact effectively with sponsors and the public. They felt that the intensity of the job is not fully expressed to new hires, and it should be more clearly expressed. Staff acknowledged that they know that being understaffed is part of nonprofit work culture, but given the size of the festival they felt it was unrealistic to manage it with so few staff.
 - Several staff reported that Pride staff get the brunt of rudeness and aggression from unhappy community members, and they do not receive support around this beyond being told to fill out an incident report. Several staff reported being verbally abused by drunk people and having it treated dismissively when brought up to management. Some staff did not mind, but others were upset by it and did not feel there was enough time to debrief or be supported in those situations.

Action Items: See following page



4. Solidify Financial Management System and Reporting

Discussions with Jeff (Board Treasurer), Adam, and my own analysis of financial documents revealed that improving financial management is a priority for Halifax Pride. As the primary expert, it is important for the Treasurer to have a good picture of the finances so that they can implement best practices and guide the organization. It is also important that the Executive Director have a basic level of financial literacy and a practical system for documenting income and expenses. I recommend that Adam and Jeff sit down and have a conversation about what is possible and what they each need, and together select a financial management system (such as Quickbooks, Wave, etc.) that can be used to anticipate and track spending. This conversation should include a discussion of if financial management is something the ED can and will be able to do, or if an additional staff person is needed to assist with financial management. I also recommend basic financial literacy training for all Board members, as it is risky to only have one Board member who has expertise in this area.

In my analysis of the annual operational budget, Adam indicated that the current year's budget projections were based on the budget from the year prior, and general knowledge based on previous years. It is important that for each line of a budget it is clear where that number is coming from (i.e. a contract staff budget of \$35,000 comes from 10 staff paid at \$3,500 each) for internal planning purposes as well as for funders. In my experience, this spreadsheet should be a "living" document where changes can be easily updated and reflected in the budget. There are many operational budget templates freely available, and I recommend that Adam and Jeff work together to select one that will show a summary of current cash holdings and their intended uses.

As the Treasurer, Jeff has also made the following recommendations:

- Obtain a credit card that is strictly for Halifax Pride purchases for Full Time Staff.

- o This will cut down on confusion regarding personal vs operational expenses and can be reconciled monthly with the Credit Card Statement
 - o Link credit cards to the Halifax Pride bank account to avoid any personal cost to staff
- Procure a Quickbooks training session for the Executive Director and Treasurer. Have them walk through the functionality of Quickbooks, and some of the items that would be beneficial for an organization of our size (printing cheques through the system rather than hand-written, posting invoice, completing a bank reconciliation, etc.)
- Look into a volunteer office staff position for someone to enter weekly expenses into Quickbooks to aid in cash reconciliation in a timely manner.
 - o Have Treasurer review the Bank Rec and provide comments.
- Send all payroll reports to Treasurer before payroll is sent for processing (night before submission date). Include any expense reimbursements that occur on bi-weekly payroll reports.

Feedback:

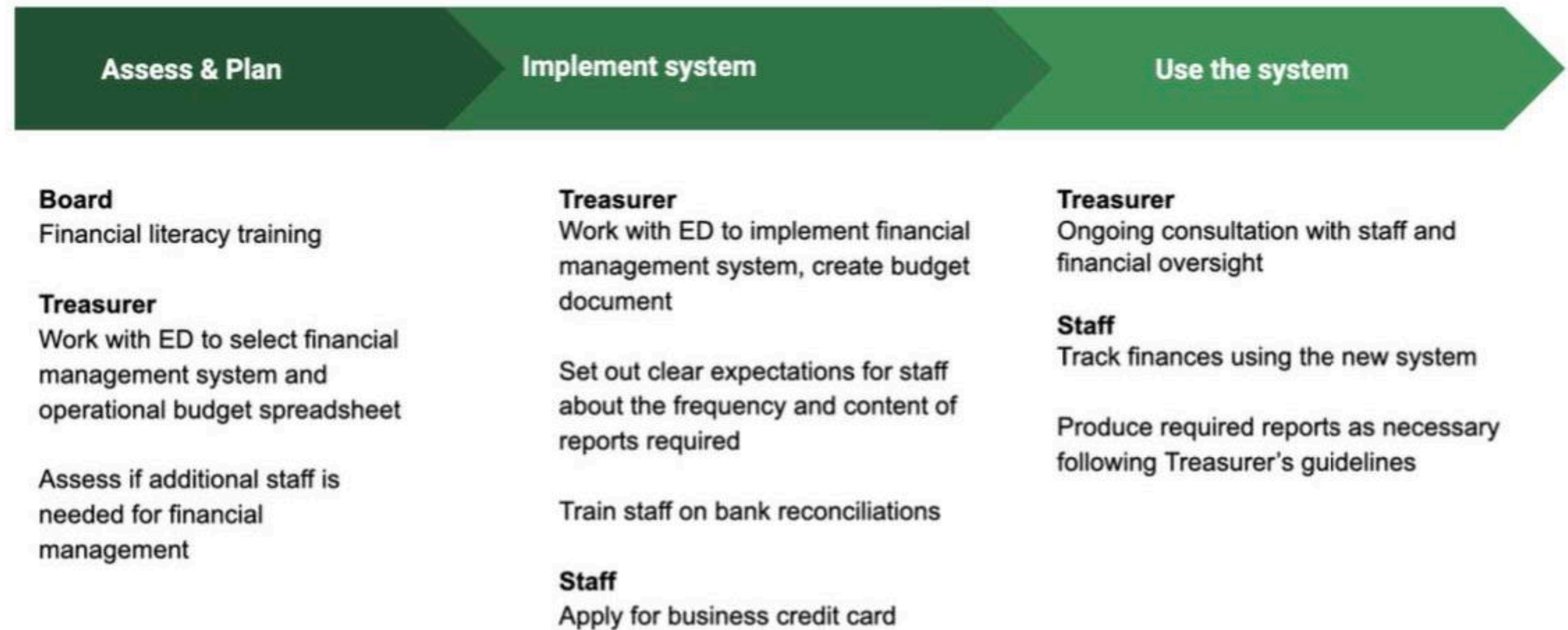
Jeff indicated that up until April 2022, there were no structured financial reports available. He expressed concern with how lax financial reporting has been because it makes it difficult to get a good picture of the cash position, lead time, or any other financial metrics, and puts the organization at risk.

- In April 2022, Jeff implemented a simple weekly cash transactions report (essentially a simplified bank reconciliation) showing the cash inflows and outflows to attempt to gain a better understanding of ongoing/recurring costs as well as timing surrounding significant cash receipts. Since then, Jeff reported that when he asked for increased financial oversight from Adam in the form of this weekly cash summary, Adam indicated that it was time-consuming to produce, and that he often has to remind Adam to produce the reports for him. Eventually, Jeff discontinued the practice as it strained Adam and he grew tired of the consistent follow up that was required.
- Jeff expressed that he knows that Adam is very busy and that there is a learning curve with financial reporting, but the lack of structure and clarity puts him in a difficult position. Maintaining and advising on the finances is his duty as a Treasurer, yet it is impossible to do effectively without a clear picture of the finances. Jeff does not like the feeling of pressuring Adam to produce reports, but since it is vital to the function of the non-profit he feels he has no choice. Adam also reported that financial management was a challenge; he felt there was no way to track how money is spent, and that no one on staff knew how to produce the reports. While Jeff trusts that Adam is experienced at running the festival and will not overspend, as the Treasurer he finds it alarming not to have a clear idea of what the financial position will be at the end of the festival. Jeff feels hesitant to continue investing time and energy into creating systems that will not be used after his departure.
- Jeff reported that the current accounting process is to bring a stack of receipts to their accountant every other month, which is not frequently enough to provide timely guidance or

catch errors. Some staff reported that they put expenses on their personal credit cards. Adam reported that Halifax Pride currently pays its staff using paper cheques.

In my analysis of the annual budget, I did not see any in-depth monthly or annual budget documents that clearly explained anticipated income or expenses for operational or grant-restricted funds.

Action Items:



5. Create a Fundraising Strategy & Plan

Halifax Pride has reached the limit of what it can do with its current financial resources. Using project-based grants to support an organization is not sustainable because applying and fulfilling the grants takes away the Executive Director's time and energy, and results in restricted funds that can only be used on a specific project when operational funding is needed. I recommend that Halifax Pride prioritize seeking grants to support the day-to-day operations and avoid applying for project-based grants that will burden the already overburdened staff.

Halifax Pride needs support with making its fundraising events profitable and reaching new sponsors. *Giving fundraising guidance and support is one the Board's duties to Halifax Pride, and I strongly recommend onboarding at least one Board member with fundraising or development experience.* This Board member should lead the Fundraising Committee that will work with the staff to create fundraising goals, plan events and reach out to potential sponsors. The Fundraising Committee can also work with Adam to determine why fundraising events have been losing money. There is an opportunity to reach out to sponsors to fund specific spaces. For example, Bubly is a sponsor of other Pride festivals around Canada and could be a strategic sponsor for the sober space. The tourism industry has also been highlighted as a possible sponsor; research revealed that other Pride festivals receive considerable funding from their local tourism associations.

Feedback:

Adam expressed that Halifax Pride has reached the limit of how much it can do at its current level of funding. He believes that Halifax Pride is successful overall, but it has reached its capacity in terms of event quality, headliners, and staff pay.

- Halifax Pride's financial situation is tenuous, as Adam expressed that a weekend of rain would prove financially disastrous for the festival. Adam discussed that Halifax Pride has a number of operating grants, but these grants do not cover all the expenses, which necessitates project-based grants to cover the rest. Applying for project-based grants takes time, Halifax Pride does not have the capacity to manage more projects, and Adam is uncomfortable asking people to do things for free. He has expressed that the priority for the next 6-8 months is to do outreach to different levels of government to see if there are other funds available. I observed that Adam is currently the only person seeking out funding for Halifax Pride.
- Adam reported that Halifax Pride does not receive many donations because it is not a charity, and that most fundraising events barely break even because "the community bristles at paying money." I noticed that, according to the annual report, Halifax Pride is running a loss on its fundraisers (\$29,000 income, \$52,000 expenses, a loss of \$23,000). This year Halifax Pride added many smaller partnerships and Adam would like to prioritize bigger sponsors moving forward. Adam expressed that he saw an opportunity for marketing support from the local tourism industry, given how many people Halifax Pride draws to the province/city and that other festivals receive support.

Action Items:



6. Develop a Marketing Strategy & Plan

An increased focus on marketing and promotion will benefit Halifax Pride's fundraising efforts, community engagement, event awareness, and sponsor outreach. I recommend that Halifax Pride onboard a Board member with marketing, PR, or promotion expertise who will lead the Communications & Marketing Committee to create a marketing strategy and plan. If no Board member is found, I recommend outsourcing to a consultant or marketing firm to help flesh out the strategy and plan in collaboration with staff and the Board. There are federal grants available to help nonprofits with The marketing plan should include a social media strategy which outlines clear timelines and goals. With communications and marketing there is always additional work to be done, and the fact that Fiona struggles to delegate tasks to committee members indicates that she would benefit from mentorship in this area. There is no shortage of content that the committee could create. For example, committee members could create new content that can be posted any time of the year and boost awareness and engagement (questions, polls, short interviews with members of the queer community, cross-posting local events, re-posting tiktoks in line with Pride's values, updates on what Pride is doing behind the scenes, etc.) There is also an opportunity to update sponsorship contracts to include mandatory cross-promotion of events and the distribution of Halifax Pride event schedules at businesses with storefronts. Under the guidance of the Communications & Marketing Committee Lead, I recommend that Halifax Pride create a document that clearly shows Halifax Pride's impact on the local economy that can be presented to city officials and tourism offices to encourage increased operational funding and promotional support leading up the festival.

Feedback:

Volunteers, staff and Board members saw marketing and promotion as an area for improvement.

- It was noted that many people do not use the website to access the festival schedule, and that having print pamphlets available at the festival site and around the city would be helpful. One Volunteer Lead noted that there were no printed schedules/pamphlets available for distribution at the bar, tickets area, or in the sober space at the festival. One Board member asked if sponsors promote the pride events in their locations, and if not they proposed that this should be the case. They suggested that the city of Halifax could invest in signage, billboards, and stands for schedules to promote the festival. They also noticed that most of the social media promotion was for the large events, and that there is an opportunity for more promotion of the smaller events and spaces with clips of people talking about why the spaces (i.e. sober, QTBIPOC, immigrants) are important. As the Communications Lead, Fiona expressed that she is sometimes not sure what tasks to delegate to the committee members, and she feels like the committee is not productive.

The promotion that I saw on Halifax Pride's instagram and Facebook page was primarily centered around event promotion featuring photos or video clips from those events. The format was consistently a basic background image with text about the time and location of the event. I did not see a clear social media strategy in use (i.e. creation of a social media campaign, clear goals for the campaign, tracking campaign success).

Action Items:



7. Prioritize Volunteer Well-Being and Appreciation

Without volunteers, the Halifax Pride festival would not function. It is important to give them the care and appreciation that they deserve so that they feel taken care of during the festival and keep coming back. This is a strategic recommendation because more appreciation for volunteers would help them feel like VIPs and turn them into ambassadors for Halifax Pride, bringing in more volunteers and ultimately creating a stronger community and festival. From my discussions with Volunteer Leads, my sense is that they would be enthusiastic about creating and improving the processes that affect them if they were empowered to do so. I recommend the creation of a Volunteer Committee to be led by a passionate group of volunteers who are given the resources to improve the volunteer experience. This would create the additional benefit of year-round volunteer involvement, support with tasks such as volunteer recruitment, fundraising events, and other off-season tasks. Ideally, the committee would receive a budget to support their work and well-being.

Feedback:

Several Volunteer Leads reported that volunteers were not given time to eat or rest during the festival. They reported that the food arrived after midnight and that they had been hungry for hours, or they were not made aware when the food arrived and they missed the opportunity to take a break to eat. One volunteer lead acknowledged that it was hard to find a good time for everyone to eat, but proposed that someone could deliver food to each area so volunteers are aware that there is food and get a chance to take a break. They noted that while Halifax Pride does not discourage breaks, they should actively encourage breaks and make it more explicit that if volunteers are overwhelmed they can step away. They suggested improved messaging during volunteer orientation so volunteers know that they can take breaks as needed and they “don’t need to feel guilty.” Many volunteers indicated that they were not sure if they were allowed to attend events for free, and that if so, it should be more broadly publicized.

Action Items:



8. Create Improved Systems for Community Member Engagement and Feedback

Multiple stakeholders reported that the systems for community member engagement and feedback were unclear or absent. In order to foster community engagement, I recommend that Halifax Pride revamp their committee meetings by periodically having in-person meetings with a social component—an activity, free food, a potluck, etc. The fact that there is a committee budget that does not get used indicates either that Committee Chairs are not aware that a budget is available, or have not planned committee meetings that involve a social aspect that would warrant the use of the budget. Better promotion of the committees on the Halifax Pride website and at events would help boost community engagement. To improve communication between the Board and the Communications Lead, I recommend that during each Board meeting the Board make a list of any upcoming committee events and send the details of the events to the Communications Lead so they can create content and promote it in time to spread awareness. I also recommend that Halifax Pride improve the avenues for community feedback by adding clear messaging and a webform on their website, running an additional town hall as proposed, and adding messaging on the website and social media that outlines how to give feedback. In order to better support the Communications Lead, I would recommend that the staff and Board work together to come up with a policy and standard messaging for responding to negative feedback posted publicly on social media.

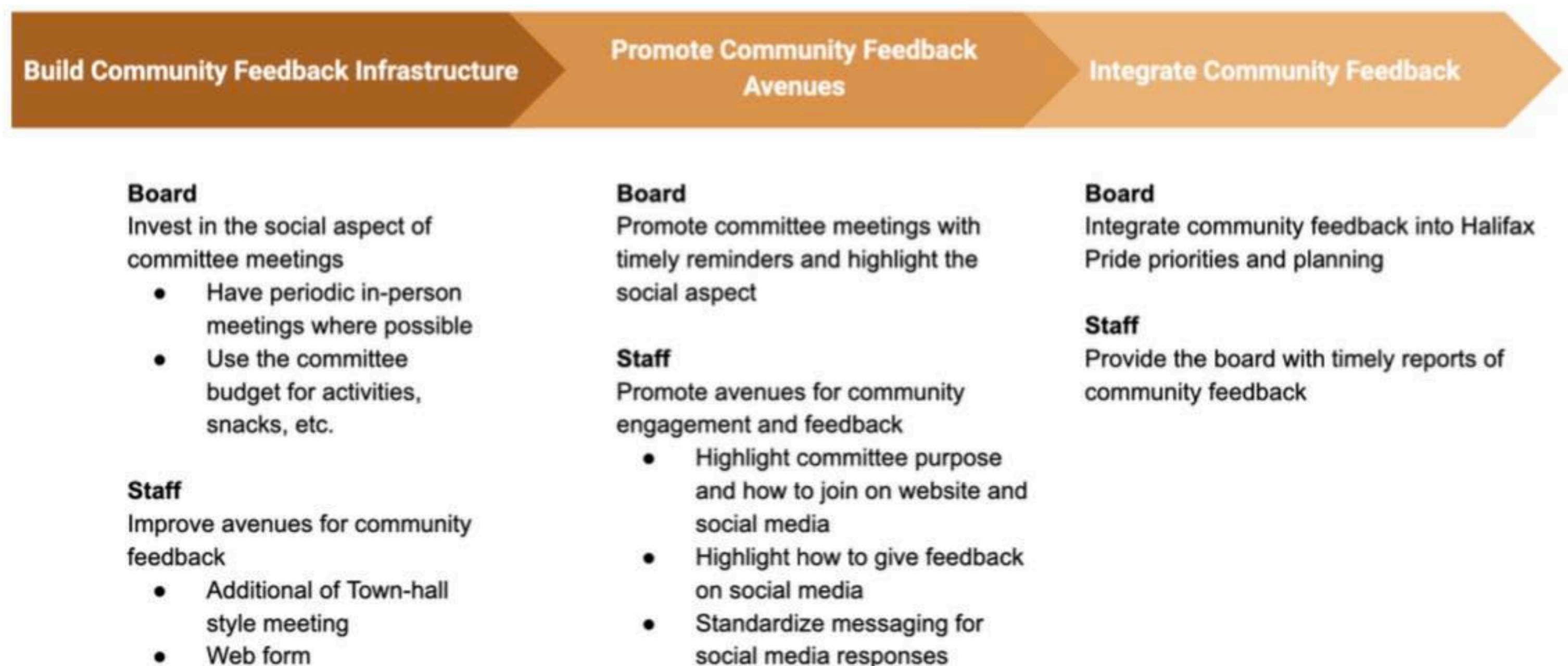
Feedback:

- **Committees:** Adam and Board members reported that since the pandemic, committee membership has fallen and it has been difficult to find enthusiastic new committee members. They believed that part of this was related to Zoom burnout, and part was a lack of community awareness that committees exist. One Board member asked, “How can people sign up for a committee they’re not aware of?” They noted that they ran an event that relied on word of mouth for attendance because there was no promotion of the event on Halifax Pride’s website

or social media, and that cultivating awareness and excitement about events was an organizational weakness. Another Board member found that if their committee meetings involved food or an activity, they were better attended. Board members indicated that having committees is important, but they did not always feel they were productive. One community member of the Communications Committee questioned the purpose of the committee. In looking through the committee meeting notes, I found that many of the folders were empty and that the committee budget has gone mostly unused this year.

- **Community Feedback:** One Board member felt that the average community member does not know how to address their feedback or frustrations to Halifax Pride. This has resulted in people resorting to social media to air their grievances, which is not always productive. As the Communications Lead, Fiona mentioned that she is often the only person to see the negative feedback that Halifax Pride receives on social media, which can be challenging. Sometimes she feels she cannot respond to feedback because people are trying to provoke an online fight and not have a meaningful conversation. One Board member noted that it would be nice to have a better process for community feedback to be given directly. They suggested the addition of a community town hall so that there would be one pre-Pride town hall in March/April, and another after Pride in August/September so community members can have a space to debrief and vent their qualms before and after the festival.

Action Items:



9. Continue to Prioritize Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at All Levels

Inclusion is an ongoing process and not a box to be checked. Halifax Pride should continue to prioritize diversity and inclusion across all levels of the organization and build upon the work that has been done over the past few years. I recommend that Halifax Pride hire a facilitator to do anti-oppression training with staff and Board members, and help explore non-colonial modes of

running the Board. It is important that Halifax Pride host a public discussion on how to treat COVID concerns at events moving forward since many community members are immunocompromised and felt unsupported by Halifax Pride's lack of official messaging on the issue. I foresee that this issue will continue to arise, and it would be best for Halifax Pride to acknowledge its shortcomings in this area and develop a plan with the community moving forward. I also recommend that Halifax Pride leadership create systems to ensure that the relevant advisor is consulted on ongoing issues within their area of expertise while simultaneously improving avenues for community feedback (see Recommendation #8).

Feedback:

All stakeholders emphasized that they saw and appreciated the strides that Halifax Pride was making towards diversity, equity and inclusion at the festival. At the same time, I received important feedback on how Halifax Pride could improve in these areas.

- Covid Safety:** It was reported that attendees—and specifically immunocompromised people—did not feel safe at Halifax Pride events and did not find that the messaging around masking was clear, consistent, or that masking was promoted strongly enough. Several people noted that messaging along the lines of “We know it’s optional, but it’s recommended” and “please respect those wearing masks” would have encouraged masking and helped people feel more supported. Multiple stakeholders expressed concern that Pride was a superspreader event. One attendee suggested the distribution of different colored stickers to people upon entry to indicate how safe people felt being approached in the time of COVID (i.e. green = approach me, yellow = approach but keep a 6-foot distance, red = not open to being approached).
- Sober Space:** All stakeholders were excited that Halifax Pride added a sober space to the festival. The volunteer lead for the sober space suggested better promotion for the space in terms of signage and outreach since many attendees indicated that they had no idea there was a sober space until they stumbled upon it by chance. Volunteer leads and Board members brought up that having the sober space sponsored by the NSLC was a problematic oversight given that some sober people struggle with addiction. They reported that ultimately the NSLC selfie area was moved, but it is important that in the future that space is supported by a more appropriate sponsor. One volunteer also noted that having a sober selfie space with #SoberPride or #UntoxicatedQueers and some selfie props would have improved the space. They also suggested that any place that serves alcohol should also serve water and non-alcoholic beverages. Multiple stakeholders proposed that Halifax Pride designate one night of the festival to a sober dance party, and that this would go a long way in support of the sober community who want to dance but are not interested in a rowdy, alcohol-fueled party.
- Board Management:** It was brought up by one Board member that even though the Board itself is very diverse, the management style of the Board meetings feels very white and eurocentric. For example, Halifax Pride Board meetings loosely follows Robert’s Rules, which were created in the late 1800s by an army engineer who drew from parliamentary documents

in its creation, and all of the authors have been white male parliamentarians.² It was asked if there was a more decolonial way of running a Board that is less top-down. One Board member brought up that there was no anti-oppression training during the most recent Board orientation, and there should be one each year.

- **Accessibility:**

- **Physical Accessibility:** Multiple people expressed that the lawn chairs area at large Pride events were not a good accessibility solution. People appreciated that Halifax Pride responded immediately to their concerns, but felt that they could have done better from the outset. Staff expressed that the physical intensity of the staff roles was not clear from the job description, and this could be dissuasive and challenging for someone with a physical disability.
- **Lighting & Tech:** One volunteer lead noted that there was a “serious lack of lighting” on the field once the sun went down. They observed that the entire bathroom area was lit by one light at night, which was a safety and accessibility issue. They suggested multiple larger flood lights for next year. Several people reported that the quality of the live stream of the Pride parade was not as good this year in terms of quality and hosting, and that the feed was cut out before the end.
- **Learning Disabilities:** One staff person reported that Halifax Pride is not an accessible workplace for people with learning disabilities. They felt that there were no time accommodations given (i.e. extra time, pay, or support) when tasks took longer, and that the lack of structure and clarity around roles makes working with Halifax Pride more challenging for those with learning disabilities. Adam noted that asking staff if they require accommodations has not been a part of the hiring process.

- **Diversity of Events:** Board members expressed that they would like more diversity and creativity in the events. For example, a queer Arabs event, a silent disco, or a sober dance party. They felt that the main party events have not changed much over time, and it would be refreshing to see a more creative approach. Adam noted that the primary purpose of the Board is to propose new events, and he would welcome proposals for more creative events.

² <https://robertsrules.com/our-history/>

Action Items:

Set the Groundwork	Put it in action	Build in feedback
Board Do outreach for an anti-oppression training facilitator for staff and board members With ED, have discussion about treatment of COVID moving forward Staff Continue to hire staff and consultants who are qualified to advise on specific issues and events (i.e. QTBIPOC, sober space, immigrants, accessibility issues, immunocompromised queers, etc.)	Board Implement anti-oppression training as part of board orientation Explore non-colonial modes of running nonprofit boards Staff Create system to ensure that the relevant advisor is consulted on issues that affect them Work with advisors to improve the appeal and accessibility of events to community members	Staff Improve avenues for community feedback Promote avenues for community feedback

10. Build Internal Capacity Through Documentation

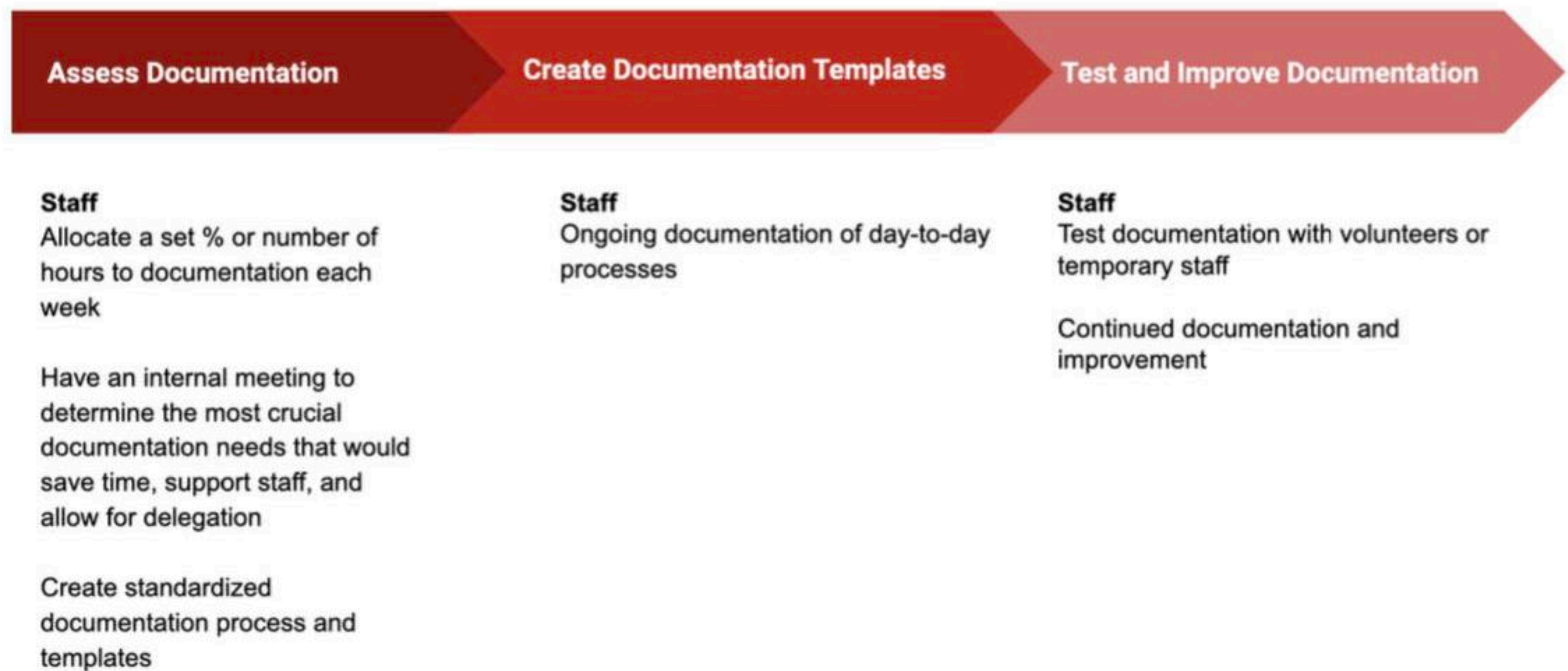
Staff voiced concerns about the impact of a lack of documentation of processes on their current role, and on future staff who will occupy their roles. Documenting how things are done in a “how-to” guide is important because it builds institutional knowledge that allows for knowledge transfer, delegation of tasks, and a framework to build upon as processes change over time. A lack of documentation is one of the root causes of staff being unclear on what their roles are, how to do them, or who (if anyone) possesses the knowledge about how to do any given task. In my experience with other nonprofits, a lack of documentation is the result of being under-resourced. The attitude of “it would take longer to document it than to do it myself” tends to come from people who are overworked and do not feel they have enough time to both do their job and document how to do their job. While taking the time to document does take time in the short term, in the long term it is time-saving. The creation of standardized documentation templates and processes (i.e. processes should be broken down into clear steps, containing deadlines for tasks, contact information, etc.) would help make it clear to staff what information is vital to keep track of in their roles. I strongly recommend that the creation of documentation is built into all roles that are lacking how-to documentation with a set number of hours dedicated to the task each week until there is a basic how-to guide for all processes (internal and public-facing) associated with running Halifax Pride. A good way to test if the how-to documents are clear enough is to have staff or volunteers who are unfamiliar with the processes look at the documentation and ask questions to ensure that they would be able to complete the tasks based only on the information in the how-to guide.

Feedback:

Fiona indicated that there was very little documentation when she started, and there was no operational documentation from before 2019. She noted that she and Adam continue to document

processes over time, but they both expressed concern that if they quit tomorrow there would not be enough documentation for someone else to take over their roles. One staff person indicated that there were no written processes when they started their role, and that the lack of documentation made them feel very unsupported. Several staff said that they felt like it would take longer to explain to someone else how to do a task than to just do it themselves, which led to them feeling like they had to do everything themselves. One Board member expressed the hope that when Adam decides to leave Halifax Pride there will be a year-long replacement period so that the transition is well-planned with forethought and time for the new person to learn the ropes.

Action Items:



F. Conclusion

The root cause of most of Halifax Pride's challenges is a lack of resources, financial and human. Investing time and energy into human resource management and financial management are vital to the longevity of Halifax Pride. In order to be financially viable, Halifax Pride needs more leadership from the Board as it relates to fundraising, marketing, and sponsorships. With committees led by Board members with expertise in these areas, Halifax Pride would be in a good position to leverage the skills and passion of the community to build on the work that has already been done. Implementing all of these recommendations represents no small task, and the Board and Executive Director will have to work together to prioritize which are most important and attainable given the resources available. Ultimately, I hope that the findings of this report serve as the catalyst for the creation of a strategic plan that will inform Halifax Pride's direction in the years to come.

G. Appendix

1. SWOT

Strengths: What an organization excels at and is within its control.

Weaknesses: What prevents an organization from performing at its optimum level and is within its control.

Opportunities: Favorable external factors that could be beneficial to an organization.

Threats: External factors that are out of an organization's control and have the potential to cause harm.

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community-focused events</i> • <i>Volunteers - quantity and commitment</i> • <i>Diversity and lived experience of Board</i> • <i>Venue security for the next 5 years</i> • <i>Reputation - Receptive to community feedback</i> 	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lack of resources (financial and HR)</i> • <i>Limited governance experience on Board</i> • <i>Communication</i> • <i>Marketing & Promotion</i> • <i>HR Management</i> • <i>Financial Management</i>
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Growth - size and production value of events</i> • <i>Committees - volunteers are engaged</i> • <i>Marketing support from the tourism industry</i> • <i>Onboarding of new Board members with specific skills</i> • <i>Sponsorships - tourism, City of Halifax, space sponsors</i> 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Price increases (for artists, staff wages, rentals, and general inflation)</i> • <i>Unpredictable weather</i> • <i>Lack of multi-year funding</i> • <i>Grant timing</i> • <i>Pride-goer expectations for bigger, better, flashier events</i>

2. Potential Grants

[Artistic Catalysts](#)

[Boost your Business Technology](#)

[Digital Assistance for Small Businesses](#)

[Foreign Artist Tours](#)

[Jobs and Growth Fund](#)

[Regional Economic Growth through Innovation](#)

3. References & Resources

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