

**DOC GOES DIGITAL:  
BUILDING A STRONG CHAPTER  
ONE MEMBER AT A TIME**

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**DOC**

DOCUMENTARY  
ORGANIZATION OF CANADA  
DOCUMENTARISTES  
DU CANADA

**2021**



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des arts  
du Canada

# INTRODUCTION

Whether we're connecting with members online or offline, nourishing those bonds follows basic principles. Cultivating membership is akin to building community, neither of which work without collaboration and engagement in an inclusive framework. Better community outreach will lead to better and more trusted decision-making, though it is an ongoing process that will always require tweaking and improvements. There's no magic formula for success and mistakes are par for the course, but as long as attempts at connection are genuine and open-minded while maintaining equity, patience and flexibility, everyone will benefit.


Building your chapter requires an exchange of information and trust. Each new member offers a chance to begin again and to explore the mutual impact of their presence in the chapter's ecosystem. And who better to shed light on these strategies than DOC members new and established. This report has been distilled from the findings of a national-level consultation conducted over the winter of 2021, namely regarding the needs of remote members, and owes its insights to members from all chapters. Here are some guidelines you can follow in order to strengthen your efforts of connection and concertation.

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## SHARE INFORMATION

- Get new members and volunteers up to speed on your chapter, the work you've done so far, and your plans for the future through your various online platforms.
- Better understand the network that you work within and shed light on it.



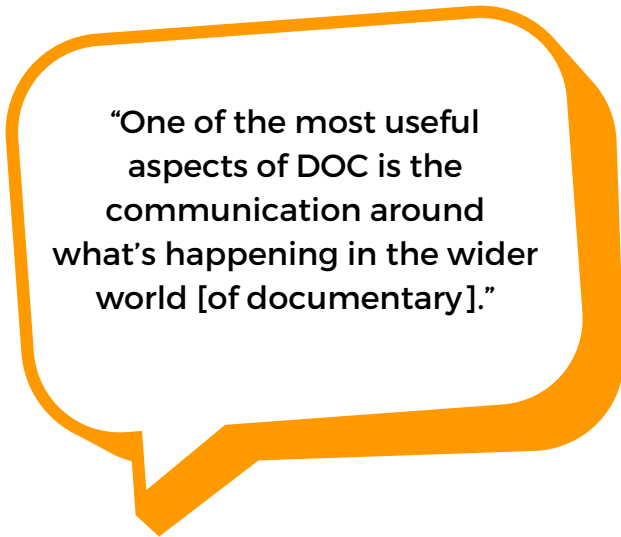
"I rely on word-of-mouth recommendations to make all kinds of decisions. If there was a way for my chapter to simulate this, that would be great."

"I'm a DOC member, but I'm not very aware of what's on offer. I'd love to have a space to exchange with other filmmakers, to have mentorship opportunities."

Your chapter's path is an ongoing story, so keep it relevant! Make sure that information about the chapter's main organizers and its principal projects and engagements is up-to-date and a testament to the vivid and ongoing nature of your work. This should be reflected in some way on your website and/or through the main social media channels and newsletters that you send out.

Keeping information up to date is a challenge when operating with minimal-to-no funds, but getting behind one or two strategies that you upkeep with regularity will go a long way with members. If you only maintain a Facebook page, make sure that you're consistent in your frequency of posting. If you rely on a newsletter, making it regular is key. Members have reported infrequency and irregularity of communications being a key dissuader in adherence.

Not all members are at the same place of understanding the ecosystem in which documentary flourishes in Canada. Mapping out the ecosystem for members can go a long way to help more novice documentary professionals grasp areas of growth, whereas it may also shed light on gaps in understanding for more seasoned folks. What would it look like to draw that map beyond the bounds of written description? This exercise can be helpful to plan out information sharing strategies to ensure that all your bases are covered and that you're not just always posting about one kind of information. Whomever is in charge of outreach and community management within your chapter can use this map to brainstorm online content strategies that keep communication assorted and fresh.

A quote is presented inside a hand-drawn style speech bubble with a thick orange border. The bubble has a tail pointing downwards and to the left.

“One of the most useful aspects of DOC is the communication around what’s happening in the wider world [of documentary].”

Another perspective on understanding the chapter's network is getting a better idea of all the various other associations, advocacy groups, service organizations, unions and interest groups that your membership belongs to. Each area of belonging will bring with it some overlap in membership, demonstrating how members are active in a variety of other civil society, business or governmental organisations as part of their jobs or community organizing. Grasping the overlap in membership and association will enhance the chapters' own sense of its potential agency. These overlaps can be illustrated in bubbles or Venn diagrams to drive home the complexity and vivacity of a chapter's unique ecosystem.

## **WHERE DO WE INFORM?**

- Social Media
  - Newsletters
  - Paid digital/social advertising (when warranted)
  - Webinars
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## ENGAGE THROUGH CONSULTATION

Filmmakers and creators around the country no longer feel represented by outdated top-down power dynamics. To build stronger, healthier and more democratic chapters, engage your members and co-create policies while trying not to overharvest data. After all, who knows better what the members need than themselves? Tap into the collective intelligence and facilitate members exchanging views and resources with each other.



What do you want from DOC?

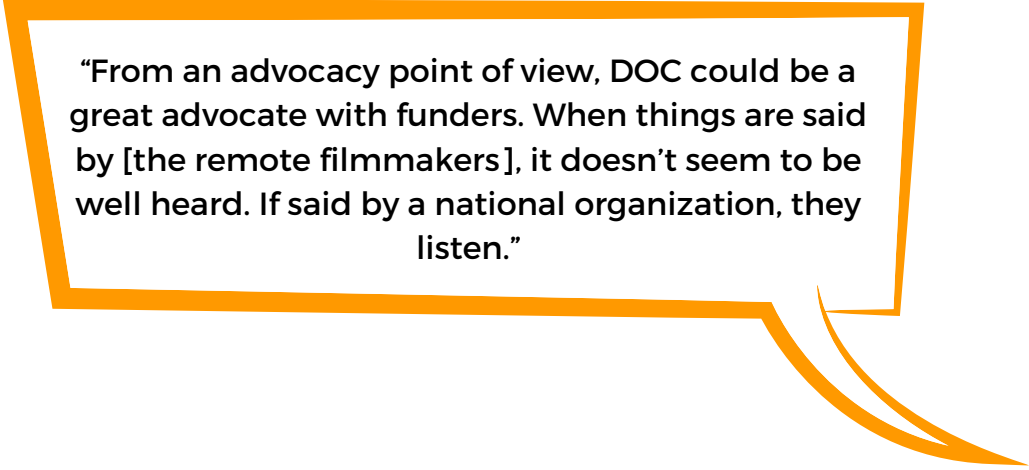


“I don’t know where to start finding local filmmakers.”

“I’d love to have access to events where we can more easily connect with others from outside major cities. This would help me feel more connected to the rural communities.”

“I’d love to be able to find a francophone crew outside of Quebec, and it’s even harder to find francophone producers.”

“I’m hungry for new resources.”

A quote is presented inside a white speech bubble with a thick orange border. The bubble has a tail pointing towards the bottom right. The text inside is centered and reads: "From an advocacy point of view, DOC could be a great advocate with funders. When things are said by [the remote filmmakers], it doesn't seem to be well heard. If said by a national organization, they listen."

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This engagement begins immediately at the onboarding process, which is the first step in building trust with new members. As everyone's time is precious and energies more potent when focused, seek to go beyond the information that is regularly gleaned in the membership sign-up process towards a comprehensive register of what's driving adhesion. Not everyone joins with a mind to actively participate. Some join to be supported by advocacy work, whereas others join for the networking and educational opportunities. Creating a Google Form or other modular data collection tool to get more than just identifying information will reduce the amount of direct work on behalf of chapter coordinators while also helping new members feel heard right out of the gate.

Ask yourselves what would be most useful for your chapter to know: Why are new members wishing to join? What issues are foremost on their mind? What do they want their DOC chapter to do for them? What skills and tools do new members bring with them beyond their valuable role in the documentary world? And importantly, are there identifiers i.e. gender, pronouns, race, disability that are necessary to this member's positive experience of being in community? You can also have an open field for whimsy and insight that can lead to unknown places!

Whenever it is that you ask your community to engage with you, make sure that you're getting the most focused information you can.

Another helpful way to tap into your community is to use the Q&A function on Facebook, as all chapters are active on that platform. This is a space where members can ask the chapter anything they wish. Whichever platform you're on, try new tools available to engage membership.

In general, when active on Facebook, it can be beneficial to pay attention to the pages of other organizations, even those that are outside of the industry, from which to glean inspiration for outreach methods. Try to maintain an ongoing list of kinds of posts with some links as examples so that you have something to rest on when the inspiration is fleeting.

## **HOW DO WE CONSULT?**

- Onboarding form
  - Online surveys
  - Public opinion research
  - Focus groups
  - Facebook poll functions
  - Telephone town halls (in case Zoom is in accessible)
  - Social listening
  - Trends research
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## GET MEMBERS INVOLVED

“It’d be nice to be able to share my knowledge and bring some training to the region.”

“I’ve started my own local networking group to chat and build connections [outside of Vancouver]. It would be helpful to have a better platform for connecting.”

“In order to continue being relevant, we need to connect with youth.”

Show your members where capacity needs to be built and where they can help. A chapter is a living, constantly evolving coterie of fascinating folks with numerous different skills and visions. These are the greatest wealth of your association.

How do folks want to lend a hand? Where are the areas in your board and general organization that could benefit from distributed organizing? There’s so much power in the people DOC has brought together, it’s just a matter of democratizing the structures, whether through the creation of ad hoc committees and working groups to make space for more direct communication and feedback.

Offer people opportunities to engage at different depths of commitment. Typically, the largest number of participants will have the lowest intensity of participation. The relationship is inverse as you go up a pyramid of engagement. Successful outreach has room for all levels of engagement.


## HOW DO WE GET MEMBERS INVOLVED?

- Events (online and in person)
- Video conferences
- Regular sharing of workbooks, resources and tools (remember that even if you've posted it before, it will need reposting regularly with new highlights in order to capture different kinds of members)
- Facebook/Instagram live.
- SMS/e-mail

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## COLLABORATION IS KEY, BOTH NEAR AND FAR

As we've acutely experienced, due to COVID-19, organizations are largely switching to online engagement instead of in-person engagement. This online-only engagement creates a 'digital divide,' an uneven distribution in the access to, use of, or impact of information for a large number of people whose access to connection is challenged by remoteness. Urban members are more accustomed to being considered and targeted by outreach whereas remote and rural members are used to distance and lags in engagement. We're hearing from some remote members that making the additional effort of connecting individually adds to members' sense that their needs are being truly considered.



“Having met a veteran filmmaker in the region has been far more helpful in providing me with connections than most online workshops.”

“I see very few filmmakers from [the region] on the membership list. I’d be happy to help connect with new members in more remote areas. It’s easier for me to get in the door because they know my reputation.”

However, it is especially difficult to do this now that many traditional methods of engaging this group and other more marginalized populations (in-person at events, institutions, community events) are not available. The following are traditional, though sometimes adapted, outreach methods that can be used during this time. Remember that you already have a network of some more actively engaged members. Tap into those who’ve signaled a desire to be more involved by enlisting them as ambassadors for certain outreach efforts. This will yield greater trust in the organization while also reinforcing member connections and communication lines for the future.

## **TRADITIONAL OUTREACH METHODS**

- Include a call-in/phone option for all meetings and engagement.
- Audio services like [FreeConferenceCall.com](https://www.freeconferencecall.com); always make sure to send call-in information for Zoom.
- Use text message (SMS).
- Mail physical postcards, flyers to households.
- Work with trusted community leaders to disseminate information through their networks via phone and mail.

Of course, most of this is not news to anyone, but the reminder of these efforts is needed after nearly two years of everything going digital.

Turning to online methods, let's look at how to encourage engagement beyond using channels as spaces for disseminating information. A good number of members would like their DOC chapter to help connect them to other members and makers in their communities. How can DOC fulfill this through outreach?

As Facebook is one of the core outreach platforms for chapters, using that community for membership development makes a lot of sense. Beyond receiving information, members would like to have the opportunity to share a little about themselves. Some pages have been successful at this by allowing one day a week to be about member self-promotion moderated/approved by page administrators. Such strategies are called #bragbasket or #flexfridays and usually on Fridays. It could also be framed as a more connection-focused exercise where members seek out skills they're looking to enhance that other members may be able to share with them. Whichever approach can help shepherd in the plurality of voices that constitute chapters without drowning out the administration's own need for maintaining a dedicated channel.

Members have also been keen on being part of a more wide scale network to encourage collaboration, such as a national database of skills and interests. Perhaps a practice of such commoning on a chapter-by-chapter basis through a more modest and sporadic initiative can eventually reveal solutions to this need.

## **HOW DO WE COLLABORATE?**

- Online forums
- Offline methods
- Mapping and connecting members



## REPRESENTATION & RESPECT

This last piece is the keystone for any and all outreach and community building is the quality of equity, respect and accommodation needed to foster trust. Such respect is thought often as a given, but establishing good practices and understandings of anti-oppression and anti-racism begin with the structures that are in place within the organization itself. Once those are audited and seen in the light of how they can be structured to best support greater access and belonging for all members, then the activities that are developed by the organization have a greater chance of achieving their highest goals.

DOC's national BIPOC constituency was consulted in July and September 2020, and these exercises provided an explicit set of impressions about the quality of DOC's outreach and involvement of members hailing from their communities. It is crucial that chapters continue to hone their skills with regard to the consideration of non-dominant members in matters of meeting their needs, creating spaces of respect and belonging, and embody a structure that inspires openness.

Some chapters are already well on their way towards accountability and holding belonging and equity as pillars of all activities and practices. Their successes have been attained through connection with their constituents and listening to the plurality of voices.

Some crucial examples of how to approach this equity work, some of which have been undertaken by several chapters so far, include:

- Considering equitable representation in all chapter events by ensuring that participating speakers and panelists are indicative of the plurality of constituents and inclusive of non-dominant members;
- Intentional diversification of board members through targeted recruitment efforts to attain a more representational balance of constituents. For example, some boards have committed to attaining a representation balance of 50% BIPOC members;
- Committing to anti-oppression and anti-racism training for the main staff and board members. It would also be beneficial to extend this opportunity for all members.
- Undertaking partnerships with other organizations in an effort to address inequities in funding and representation in the documentary field;
- Offering BIPOC-centered programming and skills development;
- Developing an accessibility rider for documentary filmmaking with a lens to reduce the barriers to access for various members, such as the chapters' remote or racialized members.

These measures can yield tremendous satisfaction with regards to the chapters' efforts towards a greater connection to the needs of its members.

The historic economic inequities experienced by non-dominant documentary members can prevent adherence and participation in chapter and national events. Addressing this reality has been incredibly beneficial to DOC in 2021 as it offered free membership to BIPOC members, a move that increased membership from 750 to 1200. That's a 60% increase by reducing one access barrier! Now think of the vibrancy and relevance of the organization thanks to the influx of new voices.

The tools laid out throughout this report detail numerous ways to connect with members and get them involved in chapter activities. If community interactions increase within chapter-led spaces, there may come a time when chapters need to come up with their own guidelines to help shape the kinds of respectful and generative interactions our communities deserve. Anti-oppression and anti-racism training contribute to reflexes that hold every member's integrity at their core, but the act of determining the rules of conduct, if and when applicable, to events and gatherings can greatly influence generative outcomes and improve the safety of less dominant members.

## HOW DO WE CREATE COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS?

- Collaborative community guidelines for gatherings and meetings:
    - <https://code-of-conduct.voxmedia.com/>
    - <https://theantioppressionnetwork.com/resources/saferspacepolicy>
    - <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/groupagree>
  - Online community guideline examples:
    - <https://18millionrising.org/about/>
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