



## LINKED DIGITAL FUTURE INITIATIVE: Digital Navigation Program Evaluation

16 April 2021



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION  
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS  
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE  
DES ORGANISMES ARTISTIQUES



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Digital Navigation Program performed as a single-window access to one-on-one digital literacy and digital transformation services for performing arts and service organizations in the Canadian culture sector. Digital navigators were able to help organizations gain clarity about their digital needs and opportunities. Upon meeting several qualifying conditions (basic digital literacy and capacity), organizations were referred to a coach with skills best suited to benefit organizations based on identified needs and opportunities.

The Digital Navigation Program supplemented other services and activities within the Linked Digital Future initiative, such as the Digital Discoverability Program and the Digital Shift workshops. Performing arts organizations were encouraged to benefit from as many Linked Digital Future initiative services and activities as they wished to participate in.

During the course of the Digital Navigation Program, the COVID pandemic closed performing arts venues. Many performing arts organizations that had not placed digital literacy, capacity, and discoverability as an operational priority experienced new pressures in these strategic action areas. The program staff found themselves responding to the strategic digital needs of many arts service and production organizations at a critical juncture in history.

The pandemic served as an accelerant for several organizations in revisiting their digital toolsets, how they harness the data they gather to support strategic decision-making, and how they leverage digital tools to engage new (often broader) audiences and improve their discoverability and intrinsic value in the digital space. This report shares observations, recommendations for strategic consideration in the culture sector, and two case studies of arts organizations that altered their business models thanks to the deep work accomplished through the coaching opportunities presented.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE (Linked Digital Future, Digital Navigation Program component)

**Objectives:** The issue of metadata and search engine optimization in the era of artificial intelligence (AI) has become one of the most urgent issues in Canada's performing arts sector, which has little to no existing discoverability profile. To meet the challenges that accompany transformation and digital learning among Canada's performing arts organizations and arts service organizations, CAPACOA, the Canadian Association for the Performing Arts, and its partners have undertaken the Linked Digital Future initiative.

The Digital Navigation Program is one component of that initiative, designed with the goal of offering digital literacy resources and strategic coaching to increase the digital capacity and maturity of performing arts organizations in Canada.

**Budget:**

Here are the total professional fees paid to digital navigators and coaches over the two phases. These fees include the actual one-on-one navigation and coaching services, as well as time for the train-the-trainer event, regular team meetings, regional events, and other occasional professional development activities.

Phase	Professional fees
Phase 1 (July 2019 to March 2020)	\$57,054
Phase 2 (April 2020 to March 2021)	\$68,193
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$125,247</b>

**Timeline:** The Linked Digital Future initiative's Digital Navigation Program was undertaken over the span of two years, from March 2019 to March 2021. The program accepted applications on an ongoing basis from September 2019 to November 2020.

**Staffing:** Personnel hired for the Linked Digital Future initiative's Digital Navigation Program required the services of 6 part-time contractors: 1 lead coach ([Akouling Connell](#)), 3 digital navigators (regionally distributed: Atlantic ([Rebecca Ford](#)), Central ([Bridget MacIntosh](#)), and Western Canada ([Joyce Wan](#))), and 2 coaches ([Jai Djwa](#) and [Annelise Larson](#)).

**Media Launch and Orientation session** (Montreal): A [media launch event](#) and orientation session were held in Montreal (August 19-21, 2019).

**Digital Shift Regional Workshops:** Working with partner organizations in each region, with coordination and communications administered by the Digital Navigator assigned to each region, we held three full-day workshop sessions in Toronto (21 October, 2019; 24 participants), Halifax (24 October, 2019; 25 participants), and Vancouver (11 November, 2019; 28 participants).

The Digital Shift regional workshops were constructed to prepare the ground for the deeper work to be undertaken with coaching services offered directly to arts organizations across Canada. The workshops were designed to help sensitize arts organizations and arts service organizations to the importance of Linked Open Data (structured data) to improve search engine optimization (SEO) and discoverability with the long-term vision of building a knowledge graph for the performing arts. The workshops included four presentations:

- **Assembling a Linked Ecosystem for the Performing Arts** (outlines the discoverability challenges currently faced in the performing arts in the digital space, and the digital tools with which it can be addressed)
- **Digital Transformation and the Shared Value Shift** (describes the digital transformation journey arts organizations must address, and how this transformation plays out along the value chain and business modelling)
- **Digitally Integrated Organizations** (explores the complementary digital tool sets available to ensure that operations and strategic decision-making are properly supported by salient data within arts organizations)
- **Digital Marketing & Discoverability for the Arts** (delivers key considerations and strategies for properly equipping arts organizations for digital marketing and discoverability optimizations in a competitive online space, including [Linked Open Data](#) and [Wikidata](#))

Supplementary workshops presented in promotion of the Linked Digital Future initiative's Digital Navigation program included Radical Collaboration presentation at the Banff Centre (22 November, 2019; 53 participants) and in Ottawa (14 November, 2019; 42 participants), and Wikidata workshop and culture Digital Transformation (21 November, 2019; 11 participants) and in Ottawa (15 November, 2019, 14 participants).

**Website:** A bilingual website was developed for CAPACOA's Linked Digital Future initiative to house all components of the project: Research partnership, Prototyping, Governance, Public Engagement, and Digital Literacy: <https://linkeddigitalfuture.ca/>. A list of articles and resources to assist arts organizations on their digital maturity journey were also compiled, in addition [blog entries](#), case studies, and a series of workshops on Wikidata.

**Main regional partners for Digital Literacy activities:** [Mass Culture](#), [BC Alliance for the Arts](#), [Atlantic Presenters Association](#)

**Other Initiative Partners:** [CAPACOA](#), [Culture Creates](#), [Bern University of Applied Sciences](#), [Association Rideau](#), and [Conseil québécois du théâtre](#).

**Digital Maturity Quiz:** The [Digital Maturity Quiz](#) was conceived as a tool to help arts organizations self-evaluate their digital capacity and digital maturity, and to identify areas of strength and weakness to identify which areas were most in need of strategic development to increase overall digital maturity.

**Application for Service and Digital Navigation:** Subsequent to completing the Digital Maturity Quiz, interested arts organizations completed an [online application](#) to secure an appointment with a Digital Navigator, who reviewed the results of the Digital Maturity Quiz and conducted a subsequent interview to complete a deeper evaluation of the organization's current capacity, maturity, and digital needs and readiness for digital coaching services, and to make a recommendation for support. In cases where the digital capacity and maturity was not yet at a basic level, a list of tailored resources was compiled by the assigned Digital Navigator. In situations where the organization

was in a state of readiness for coaching, a coach was assigned according to the evaluated strategic digital needs of that organization.

**Digital Transformation Coaching Services:** Each coach brought a unique set of digital mentorship expertise to the digital navigation program. Jai's expertise lies in evaluating existing digital toolsets and identifying where deeper integration, improved efficiency, and strategic data extraction to better inform organizational decisions lies, in addition to ensuring that public-facing interfaces are optimized to perform effectively. Annelise brings considerable depth of expertise in digital marketing and search engine optimization to the coaching offer, helping clients ask the right questions, identify strategic language, and leverage the best digital tool set for engaging audiences, improving online experience, and increasing visibility and discoverability in the digital space. Akoulina offers a holistic strategic lens to assist arts organizations in connecting their vision, mission, and strategic goals to an optimized supporting integrated digital toolset and the right datasets, indicators, and networked mindset to set organizations up for success and continued agility in the digital space.

Each coaching client was offered up to 15 hours of dedicated coaching. The target for the program was to serve 20 performing arts organizations. We were able to serve 31, exceeding expectations and broadening the potential impact of improved digital capacity and maturity across the Canadian arts ecosystem.

## PROGRAM EVALUATION

### Workshops

While one-on-one digital navigation and coaching services were the cornerstone of the Linked Digital Future initiative's digital literacy efforts, they weren't the only activity. Over phases 1 and 2 of the Linked Digital Future initiative the LDFI team hosted or participated in 47 digital literacy events reaching a total of 1087 participants (see details in the [Linked Digital Future's Phase 2 report](#)).

Among other things, the Digital Navigation Program was officially launched over a series of regional workshops described above. In our exit survey of coaching clients, 87.5% of the clients who participated in these regional workshops found them to be helpful to understanding and awareness of the potential impact of linked open data on the arts ecosystem. Regionally, a greater percentage of clients from the Western region who participated in the workshop went on to pursue the coaching opportunities available to them. This may be attributable to the fine work done by the BC Arts Alliance with their Digital Ladders program.

### Digital Maturity Quiz

Of the respondents polled in the exit survey of coaching clients, 94.4% indicated that the Digital Maturity self-assessment tool was helpful in developing organizational

awareness of strengths and weaknesses in digital capacity and digital maturity. 88.9% found the self-assessment tool helpful in identifying areas where coaching was most urgently needed.

It is likely that this tool (in its current or adapted state) could be leveraged to continue to serve the continued health of the arts ecosystem as a tool to regularly check an organization's digital health.

### Digital Navigation

A whopping 94.5% of respondents found that the interview process with Digital Navigators helped them identify which business problems were most critical for their arts organization. 77% responded that they had received critical resources that assisted in addressing the digital transformation challenges their organization faces. While 27% indicated that the Digital Navigator had flagged organizations within their region tackling similar digital challenges, none of the clients we served reached out to develop partnerships or collaborations to tackle shared challenges. Networked mindset for shared success versus siloed approach for individual success may take some time to overcome in our sector. Only one client made contact with another organization to discuss best practices.

Business problems identified ranked as follows (respondents could multiple-select several options):

- 78% **Activities and Services: How you can use digital to perform activities or deliver services to your stakeholders.**
- 78% **Technology: How you can use technology for processes and activities, and the type of technology you use.**
- 72% **Engagement: How you can use digital channels to reach out to your target audience, such as marketing to digital natives.**
- 61% **Target Audience: How you can use digital to get information about your target audience (the groups of individuals that you serve) For example, their digital expectations, preferences, and behaviours.**
- 50% **Development: How you can build digital activities and services to suit development and fundraising**
- 44% **Vision: The goals you have for the digital future of your organization.**
- 44% **People and Organization: How you can enable your people to use digital tools and encourage new technology in your organization.**

Overall, 49 organizations made requests to participate in the Linked Digital Future initiative, and 31 were recommended for coaching.

### Coaching

Although the original target was for the coaching team to work with 20 clients across Canada, we served a total of 31 clients.

The number of clients who used the full 15 hours of coaching available to them was 24 (this includes the choral group workshops). The total number of coaching hours was totalled at approximately 360 (some clients were grouped according to need in a joint workshop for choral groups; a few clients completed only a small percentage of available hours because the pandemic interfered with resourcing and priorities).

The additional clients were grouped by arts discipline – a group of choral organizations had similar organizational challenges, so tailored workshop content was developed to address their needs and delivered over several sessions. Roughly 33% of the coaching clients participated in the Linked Digital Future regional workshops, so need for these services was more of a determining factor than workshop participation for engaging with the program. The satisfaction rating (out of 10) was 8.5.

All clients reported that there was clarity on the coaching process and program expectations, but only 68% reported referring to their activity plan. 94% felt supported in the work of critical reflection on their organization's digital needs, and 99% felt that their coach was a good fit. All clients were unanimous in expressing that their professional development needs were met in the coaching sessions. 94% felt that the coaching aided in meeting their organization's needs. 94% felt that the coaching met their expectations.

## Testimonials

*Third-party, critical but helpful feedback and analysis of our current practices, regional and national perspectives, concrete goals and objectives and assistance in the follow-through. Perhaps most importantly, my mentor was an anchor throughout our transition to online activities who encouraged my organization to think big and be brave. I don't think we would have had the success we did in 2020 without her.*

*The coaching sessions happened just at the right moment for VLACC: we were undergoing a Capacity Building project that included working with consultants in the development of a digital strategy and selection of a CRM Database. Also, we were hiring a web developer to work on big changes to our website. Jai Djwa was an amazing steward through those processes, helping us ask the right questions and showing us our options.*

*The discussions were eye opening to the possibilities and I became aware that I would need more support or a specified consultant if I were to move forward with any of the plans we discussed. More time and human resources are needed to implement the digital changes my organization wants.*

*Just the general knowledge and depth of experience. Annelise really opened my eyes to a few things that I could be improving on digitally and knowing that even little changes make a big difference.*



*Learning about and comparing different tools and services as they relate to, benefit, and serve the organization. Guidance in what choices to make, where to spend research energy. - Awareness of digital resources not on our radar. -Especially in website redesign research, counter arguments and awareness of what questions to ask.*

*The real-time support to implement solutions to website issues immediately. He gave me the confidence to re-design the website knowing that at every development stage, he would clearly explain the concept and guided me step-by-step in the process.*

*Deeper understanding of the potential of Social Media and how to use it more effectively.*

*The coach taught me how to develop a strong, fundamental approach to 'why' we use our digital platforms, and how it might look to support that 'why'.*

## Observations

The following are some of the main observations gleaned over the two years of intensive work in support of digital capacity building during the Linked Digital Future project:

- Networked approach is still a gap; most organizations still have the reflex to work in a siloed approach for their individual success, rather than collaborating with other organizations to tackle shared challenges and work towards shared outcomes.
- Most of the organizations asking for help had low digital maturity and capacity.
- Much of the work undertaken during coaching was tactical. Organizations didn't know how to put out their own fires, and the coaching opportunity offered brief/temporary stress relief. Some issues were long-standing until the coaching opportunity.
- The COVID pandemic was an unexpected dynamic during the course of the project, and the timing of this service was critical for several organizations as they made the pivot to delivering content and services in the digital space.
- Strategic goal setting during the pandemic was challenging for most clients, who were uncertain of the duration, impact, and resourcing for their organizations in the long term.
- Many of the clients engaged in coaching had either applied for Digital Strategy Fund grants either prior to or subsequent to coaching. It is clear that the need for increasing digital capacity and maturity within arts organizations will continue for some time. The coaching program helped make the most of this particular funding opportunity in our sector.

- The COVID pandemic served as a natural (unexpected) accelerant on digital initiatives in the arts sector. The sense of urgency to increase organizational digital capacity and maturity is now more elevated.
- A few organizations that participated in coaching undertook a shift in their business model to a hybrid live/digital model that they plan to continue (**See case studies in the Appendix**).
- Digital presence was less important before the pandemic, and then became an emergency for the arts sector when physical spaces were closed.
- Response to structured data and Wikidata was weak. It wasn't an easy sell when working towards practical applications.
- Wikidata was tucked into the coaching material, and we helped develop the mindset to consider these tactics, along with schema - and yet the priorities for most organizations were on more visible, tangible business solutions. Learning about the tools helped them feel empowered by the potential of structured data supporting discoverability and the ability to self-define, even if it was secondary to their primary concerns.

## Recommendations

- Examine ways to scale the learnings and impact of initiatives like the Linked Digital Future initiative (i.e. DIY self-paced learning; online toolkits to support digital capacity development for arts organizations; podcasts; etc.).
- The long-term benefit of digital coaching is now much clearer to participating organizations. Creating a community of best practices, shared resources, infrastructure and technology in the digital space would benefit the broader ecosystem.
- The COVID pandemic has resulted in new audience, habits, responses, and sensitivities. Tracking the evolution of how cultural products are consumed in the digital space on an ongoing basis will be essential to informing future initiatives.
- Nimble response to the pandemic proved crucial, and openness to flexible approach is a sustainability tool for arts organizations.
- The level of awareness of the need for and administration of effective strategies to achieve effective digital presence and discoverability is still fairly weak, despite the COVID pandemic. Shared outcomes, strategies and benefits need to be elaborated for the sector as a whole.
- Tailor new workshop content to strategic audiences within the arts sector:
  - Arts organization leadership requires strategic thinking supported by digital strategies for implementation, tracking, agile approach, content delivery, discoverability.
  - Arts organization communications/public relations/marketing professionals need regular professional development to keep them abreast of rapidly evolving SEO context, strategies, and tools.

## Other observations from the digital literacy team

- Digital representation: digital sovereignty, cultural sovereignty, underrepresented work, accessibility, diversity, larger questions that require strategies that affect the whole sector need to be addressed.
- Digital justice and business models: international agreements with streaming giants on copyright, AI, and content profit models - these must be addressed/ negotiated/ undertaken by government bodies, agencies, and industry associations.
- Equity: despite best efforts, improvements to ensuring that a full diversity of arts organizations have access to capacity building for digital maturity are required.
- The evolution of AI technologies is rapid; soon schema won't be needed to aid discoverability.
- Audio and voice command are the future of AI and discoverability methodologies; little is being done to prepare the arts sector for the implications of these technologies.

## PARTNERS

With thanks to our collaborators and funding partners



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des arts  
du Canada



## APPENDIX

### CASE STUDY 1

## Tuckamore Chamber Music Festival – Linked Digital Future Initiative Case Study

**Challenge – Feb 2020:** As the Tuckamore Festival started with the Linked Digital Future Initiative (LDFI) coaching, there was a lot of room for improvement in terms of both digital intensity and culture in all aspects of its operation. The festival was especially interested in increasing its discoverability online and learning how to do this through search engine optimization (SEO) and other digital marketing tactics. A big focus of concern was the festival's Young Artist Program (YAP) which did not have much visibility online and received submissions exclusively through traditional word of mouth. We were going to use the YAP as an applied example, with the goal of targeting and reaching young people who play cello, piano, viola, and violin where their time and attention was already spent online, YouTube.

### **COVID Pivot – Mar 2020:**

With the pandemic shutting everything down just a few weeks later, the festival (and its associated programs for young artists and young composers) had to decide how it was going to proceed, or even if there would be a festival in 2020. There had been a big plan for its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary that year, with international artists, a province wide tour and several extra events outside the regular season. After much discussion they decided to move ahead with a purely virtual 10-day event in August. Besides reaching out to the local university, they also needed coaching support that focused on marketing this pivot.

### **Work with LDFI Coach:**

One of the great things about the Tuckamore team is, even before COVID, they were eager and interested in running all kinds of experiments, stretching far outside their comfort zone. They entered into their work with me with great excitement and willingness to try anything. This stood them in good stead with the unexpected challenges 2020 brought to the performing arts. Here are some of their experiments during our time together:

- A new YouTube content strategy that included a series of videos with the Artistic Directors of the festival (Duo Concertante) providing tips and insights into their creative practice. The Tuckamore team brainstormed many potential topics and I conducted keyword research (a process that accesses data on how many times phrases are searched on Google every month from the search engine's ad platform). This

research allowed us to rank these topics in terms of number of searches (which reflected a level of interest) and they moved ahead with creating the video series @Home with Duo Concertante

- Pre-COVID we also focussed on getting the festival into the Wikidata database, which is one of the discoverability foundational tactics recommended by the LDFI. The Managing Director and I had just started adding to the listing in this important public database as the pandemic shifted priorities for the team.
- Once the festival decided to go completely virtual, everything about its online presence needed to be upgraded immediately. This included technology for capturing, editing and streaming the festival, as well as upgrading and improving the discoverability of the website and the effectiveness of its social media. Once more this experiment-embracing team rose to the challenge.

Regular meetings between myself and the Managing Director focused on all the ways this opportunity could be leveraged, from updating the WordPress site and plugins from an SEO perspective to tweaking Google Ads to testing Facebook vs YouTube livestream and more. Equipment was purchased, partnerships negotiated, and skilled labour secured. The Tuckamore Online festival ran from August 10-19, 2020 featuring online events and concerts, both free and ticketed events with sliding scale pricing, at the same time as the virtual programs for the young artists and composers.

### **Results of Tuckamore 2020 Online:**

The virtual festival was considered a success by the Tuckamore team, artists and audience:

- The festival was able to present over 50 guest artists in 20 original, live or curated-for-Tuckamore events.
- The audience expanded well beyond its traditional local loyal viewership to include listeners from across North America and Europe.
- The private festival videos on YouTube achieved over 3,500 views by 1,800 unique viewers from 6,800 impressions.
- Rapid digital evolution of a performing arts organization from relatively moderate digital maturity to a seasoned team with skills in online performance, audience development and engagement.

### **Lessons learned:**

The LDFI coaching work with the Tuckamore team taught everyone involved a thing or two. Some of the lessons learned included:

- The openness, flexibility and adventurous spirit of the Tuckamore team was key for them to embrace the challenges and opportunities from the pandemic

lockdown. It allowed them to not shut down, but lean into new skills and experiments. This didn't mean everything was a wild success, but there was much learning even in the things that didn't go according to plan.

- The support of the LDFI coaching was critical to build confidence in the team to stretch themselves further and to provide shortcuts and direction for their digital strategy based in digital expertise. Without it they may not have got as far as fast.
- Even if the festival is able to happen in the real world in 2021, the digital skills and equipment acquired in 2020 mean they are ready to create digital content and they are planning a hybrid festival to continue to grow their audience further and farther.
- The virtual Young Artists and Composers programs were successful, but it was hard on these young people and the social aspect was not as fully realized as they would have liked. The Tuckamore team can now see these young artists need more support in this regard. This program will not go hybrid in 2021. And, if an in-person experience is not possible, then there are plans to more fully exploit online platforms to bring these young people together through social gaming and other virtual extracurricular activities. They will be invited into being part of whole new set of experiments and leveraged more fully as a digitally savvy part of the Tuckamore team. Overall, I am extremely impressed by what Tuckamore achieved in 2020 and can't wait to see where their newfound digital expertise takes them in 2021.

## CASE STUDY 2

# Wavelength Music Arts Projects – Linked Digital Future Initiative Case Study

Between October 2019 and March 2021, as part of the Linked Digital Future initiative (LDFI), the Digital Navigation Program offered one-on-one digital transformation coaching to arts organizations across Canada. Here is a second case study from one of the program's participating organizations.

Wavelength is a unique Toronto based non-profit indie music organization. Started by musicians, they have been around for 21 years giving them an enviable history that is rare in the industry. They generate support and excitement for emerging musicians who are being overlooked by mainstream media. Wavelength, led by musician and author and Artistic/Executive Director Jonny Bunce, focuses on curation and diversity in programming.

Historically, they represent a multitude of genres coming from Wavelength's roots in indie DIY, punk rock, new music, and lately hip-hop.

I was delighted to have the opportunity to work with them.

## Challenge

Initially, in their coaching sessions, they were looking to understand how to use their digital presence more effectively and find more about their audience. They also wanted to revamp their website, which was outdated and was not too functional, but had a huge amount of past events and artists. However, the pandemic upended all of those plans. So we quickly refocused.

## COVID pivot

In the short term, we worked to identify immediate fixes on the website and SEO optimization. This gave them a platform to drive visitors to a "one-stop shop." And then for the medium term, we realized that the website needed a complete redo, so they issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for new website development/relaunch. This was completed and now they can start planning for the long term: integrating other digital platforms & abilities.

Wavelength also strategically considered a multi-phase step into dealing with the impacts of the pandemic and I was glad to help. They had already been using alternative venues for their live events, like bike workshops and woodworking studios, so moving online was in line with the DIY aesthetic.

Firstly, in the early days of March, Wavelength decided to amplify what was happening in the community, as artists big and small turned to performing online. They were all the "artists we knew and loved", says Jonny. The website was critical in this phase.

Then, in April, they focused on education. They put on a series of workshops, 101 sessions, and webinars to build skills in their sector. Dan Mangan of <https://sidedooraccess.com/> and Guillermo Subaste of <https://www.streamtuneup.com/> provided artists with insight and education around streaming and technology. There was a lot of engagement as artists learned how to perform online.

While livestreaming concerts have been around for years, they have always been secondary to the live events. Now in the pandemic, Wavelength recognized that there were some new opportunities.

1. Livestreams are great for engagement, as you can have a stronger tie with the artist.
2. There is a lot of opportunity for visual creativity as the screen allows for integration with many different types of media.



3. People won't tolerate bad sound, so make sure that there is high-quality audio.

With this in mind, Wavelength started their own concerts in May. They realized that if most of the concerts were solo artists performing themselves from home, what was the role of a producer like Wavelength? It really brought them back to the DIY scene. The role was still to first make sure that artists were paid. And also, provide them with technical support.

Importantly, Wavelength could turn online shows into special events, by linking different artists together. They have always featured multiple artists, just like their live shows. As because during the pandemic, it was mostly solo artists that were able to perform, Wavelength events with multiple artists builds and fosters community. They do this by bringing together different communities of audiences into a bigger community. They also realized that any one performance can't be too long.

Wavelength learned a lot about drop-off of audience numbers when they had ten artists in a 6-hour show, as that suffered drop-off by the end. They also experimented with timing of the concerts, giving them the opportunity to change when people wanted to see shows. It didn't have to be at 8pm. In fact, they found the 5pm slot more effective. They completed a number of experiments and learned from each one.

They also considered ticketed shows with lots of internal debate. In the end, because of their mandate to support emerging artists, audiences don't know the acts. So helping them build their fan base was key. As Jonny says, "I'd rather 100 people see a band for free rather than 10 people pay."

Of course, it isn't easy to ensure everyone is paid while revenue is \$0. So, Wavelength generates sponsorship and grant revenue to keep it free. They initially also saved on production costs, but now as they move back into more traditional venues, they have added costs of camera crews. They are still able to subsidize this with support from the Canada Council for the Arts.

For their 2021 21st Winter Festival they had intended to try ticketing, but Harbourfront in Toronto came in with a contribution to support it free. This has given them the further motivation to try to keep this free for the rest of the year.

One thing that Wavelength has noticed is that while at the beginning of the pandemic there were a lot of live sessions, people are moving towards more pre-recorded so the artist can have control. But you still need to create a suspension of disbelief that can maintain the illusion that the act is live. Wavelength wants to preserve the feel like it is live. Like a mic could be dropped or anything could happen.

They have also increased their educational events, doubling them from last year.

## Work with LDFI coach

For both the coach and Wavelength, the process was successful. As Jonny said, “It was a pleasure to work with Jai and he really ‘got’ our organization’s aesthetic and ethos. We are currently well positioned to undertake the next phase of digital transformation. He also was very engaged with our online music programming during the pandemic and encouraging of us to explore multiple platforms.”

From my perspective, I was very impressed with the strategic way that Wavelength approached the pivot from the pandemic. They knew their mandate and translated how that would work to the new pandemic realities. With their strong social following, and an enviable audience of Millennials, their understanding of the relationship between audiences and bringing artists together made many of their concerts very successful. They [presented over 20 events last year](#).

## Results

The importance of a clear vision for responding to a crisis is exactly what Wavelength proved. Their multi-phase, iterative approach led to understanding how they would be successful. They learned what needs to be improved and how to communicate that to potential collaborators. Plus, their phases used strategic thinking about the use of digital platforms for music presenting which gave them a strong base for all their shows. Their refocus on their web platform meant they are well set up for the future.

## Lessons learned

1. Revenue models are still shaky. The real issue of how still to pay for operations and artist costs plus venues have not been answered. We are still getting by with subsidies and grants. Sponsorship is very effective right now. It will shift though. But that is ok to have a biz model that works for the moment.
2. Many concerts are going to be hybrid which gives the opportunity of a larger audience, especially for performers with a strong fan base.
3. In-person is going to be like a premium experience. Only certain people are going to want/be able to go. Targeting by risk tolerance is acceptable segmentation. People are waiting until vaccinated.
4. Ticket prices should reflect this premium experience. And flexibility will be the new norm in ticketing (cancelling, changing etc.).

5. Live performance is still a big draw.
6. Territories have long differentiated venues, but that is changing. When you can see an artist perform in Toronto online, is there a difference in seeing them online playing in Vancouver?
7. Producing organizations will need additional reasons for audiences to watch. Adding value-added content: exclusives, premieres and also Behind the Scenes (BTS), podcasts, interviews, live discussion, will all be more important.
8. Overall, the opportunity is to stop doing ineffective operations and focus on new ways and means of engaging audiences, which includes understanding them and using data. We can strengthen new inclusive and efficient foundations.