

ACOFS Fact Sheet

Australian Council of Film Societies

NUMBER 04

Starting a State Federation

The main aims of a state federation are

1. To provide support and guidance to new and existing member organisations.
2. By providing information, representation and registration, ensure that member organisations are able to operate effectively and efficiently.
3. To take appropriate action or conduct film related projects or activities in order to further the cause of member organisations.

There are many reasons for having a federation in your own state or territory.

1. Local assistance for film societies when required.
2. Better knowledge of local conditions, people and organisations.
3. Subject to the same state laws.
4. Able to co-ordinate meetings and conventions for state members.
5. Member societies can contribute to the national film society movement through the local federation.

There is no lower limit on how many member organisations can form a federation, but to be recognised by ACOFS there must be at least three member organisations with aims and rules compatible with the aims and rules of ACOFS, and they should include the exhibition of films on a not-for-profit basis. For example, this would include film societies or non-profit volunteer cinemas or film festivals, which operate within that state or territory.

A state or territory based federation must have the following to be accepted by ACOFS.

1. At least three acceptable member organisations.
2. An acceptable constitution, including appropriate aims.
3. An operating committee including president, secretary, treasurer and other committee as required.
4. Clear rules on who can join the federation and what the membership fees are.
5. Must have regular AGMs.
6. A mechanism for receipting membership fees and certifying membership with the federation and operation in a non-theatrical manner, if appropriate.

Optionally the federation might also have:

1. A bank account.
2. A regular newsletter.
3. A logo.
4. Model rules for adoption by member organisations.
5. A website.
6. Information sheets.
7. Public liability insurance policy to cover participating members.
8. incorporation.
9. Regular conventions or festivals with the AGM.

How to get started.

1. Find at least three acceptable organisations with committee members committed to forming a federation in your state. These organisations may be independent or already members of a federation in another state.
2. Decide on a constitution and aims. A model is available from ACOFS which may be adapted and adopted as required.
3. Estimate likely expenses and determine appropriate membership fees to produce a balanced budget. ACOFS can assist here as we have prepared a model budget for consideration.
4. Hold a meeting of representatives of all potential members of the federation at which:
 - a. the aims and rules of the federation are explained,
 - b. the budget is outlined and explained,
 - c. all participants are invited to input ideas and questions,
 - d. nominations are received from the floor and votes taken (if necessary) for the executive positions,
 - e. a motion to incorporate (if appropriate) is tabled and voted on,
 - f. initial fees are agreed,
 - g. participating members pay their fees.

Then the executive committee needs to swing into action.

1. Incorporate if relevant.
2. Set up a bank account.
3. Prepare a membership application and renewal form designed to highlight responsibilities and obligations of members, and appropriate fees.
4. Distribute invoices and receipts of membership fees.
5. Create and distribute certificates of current membership and non-theatrical status of members.
6. Organise a regular newsletter.
7. Apply to ACOFS for membership.
8. Notify ACOFS of members for film loss and damage insurance.
9. Allocate roles to all executive committee members (see suggested roles).
 - a. President
 - b. Secretary
 - c. Treasurer
 - d. Newsletter
 - e. Insurance
 - f. Society membership

The life force in a federation is its projects – activities which can be seen by members, and have benefits for them. Of course there are the essential jobs like membership and record keeping, treasurer, secretarial etc, - and these too should be shared round. But it is the extra projects that often attract the interest and support of members and give the federation some momentum.

Activities like:

- A regular newsletter. With input from all other activities.
- Film screenings and appraisals. Review new acquisitions at distributors, shorts etc. Output from which can go to the newsletter.
- Technical support. This can often be the source of Q&A type articles for the newsletter.
- Society liaison. As well as offering support and feedback, it is an opportunity to gather information from all societies on their programs, festivals, activities and concerns for the newsletter.
- Film Festivals. Run an annual film festival to show the latest film society type features available from distributors.
- DVD Library. Build up a library of DVDs for member societies to borrow and prepare reviews and summaries for the newsletter.
- Industry liaison. Determine what new releases there are and what is happening at the distributors. Negotiate special deals.
- Information sheets and handbook. Recording for future readers some of the lessons and experiences learned and reported in the newsletter.
- Website. This can be one of the best promotional tools and means of getting information out to all members efficiently.

Each is best handled by a semi-autonomous sub-committee charged with providing results according to an agreed calendar of events.

From any of these sub-committees more committed members will emerge who can ultimately take on more responsibility on the main executive committee or even take on the official positions.

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