



2020 - 2022 Strategic Plan

The Association for Women in Events

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A global organization, the Association for Women in Events (AWE) is a membership association that works to empower, elevate and promote all those who identify as women in the events industry. The association was born from the idea that women make up the bulk of employees in the events industry, yet there is a disproportionate amount of men who hold the highest level executive positions and leadership positions on Executive Boards.

The organization aims to create a flourishing community of engaged members, providing resources and guidance to them so that they may feel empowered in their current positions and reach their full professional potential.

To that end, AWE strives to give women in the events sector a voice and provide accolades to organizations and individuals that support women. We want to create an events industry that supports women at all levels, in all roles.

To achieve this, AWE needs to be a sustainable organization with empowered leadership.

This strategic plan is our path forward for 2020 - 2022.

OUR STORY

The Association for Women in Events was founded in March 2015 and membership was launched on January 20, 2016. It operates as a not-for-profit organization with a 501 (c) 3 tax filing status.

The original mission of AWE was to be “an inclusive community dedicated to the professional advancement of women in all facets of the events industry.”

Since 2016, membership has grown to around 500 active members. The leadership team has expanded to 19 board members and the Association is now in its teenage years, morphing from a start up to a ‘stay up’ organisation. The organization conducts the bulk of its business virtually with one part time paid administrator and the rest with volunteer staff.

SWOT ANALYSIS AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Before cementing the guiding principles, objectives and goals for the coming three years we reviewed the performance against our earlier strategic plan, and took a look out of the ‘window’ to see what’s changed out in our industry that could affect our organisation both positively and negatively.

As input to this, a survey was sent out in July/August 2019 to the current Board and 15 responses received. Another short survey was sent to members in September and around 15 responses received at the time of writing this. The results, along with discussions by the Executive Committee of 2019 (Julie Sullivan, Marie-Claire Andrews, Johnnie White, April Walsh and Kiki Fox) and with the 2019 Board at their August and September meetings are below.

SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dedicated solely to women ● Sense of camaraderie amongst the team ● Calibre of leadership ● The Elevate! Conference ● Intimate so people can effect change ● Genuine connections ● Sense of sisterhood ● Supportive ● Collaborative ● Events are inclusive, not cliquy ● All facets of industry represented ● Global connections 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brand recognition ● Member value proposition ● Too much process ● Lots of people leading, fewer doing ● Member portal ● Member retention ● Not differentiated enough in our customers' and partners' eyes ● Unclear roles and responsibilities ● Lack of enough funding to support administrative staff ● Lack of funding for marketing and other initiatives to truly drive org to next level ● Lack of data driven decision-making
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure members feel they can contribute to the organisation ● Mentoring programme ● Student mentoring programme ● Galvanize other organisations to change ● Provide women with resources to bridge whatever gap they face ● International growth ● Emerging issues to champion - equal pay etc ● Growing membership gives opportunities to analyse data 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of funding ● Insufficient performance monitoring of both finance and team ● Lack of engagement from existing members ● Lack of focus on commercial realities of running a business ● Large associations do better at their women focussed programmes ● Key people get burned out doing too much

Quotes from survey participants:

- *"I love what AWE stands for and all of the women involved. We just need to continue marketing and growing our reach. Keep up the amazing work. I'm excited to be a part of the team!"*

- *"I love being a part of this team. I wish I had even more time to share and would love if we could get more support on committees."*
- *"We all have a passion for AWE, and there are certain members who really are passionate about the organization. I really want it to succeed and to be on the map and make a HUGE IMPACT!"*
- *"I believe that AWE has the "bones" of an innovative association! I am encouraging my industry colleagues to join so we can help you develop authentic content and initiatives to make us better at all aspects of our lives!! "*

Performance Review




Below are the goals and targets set in the first Strategic Plan, along with a review of the extent to which they were achieved (absolutely, partly, not) and some comments. This informed the prioritization of goals and targets for 2020-2022 in subsequent chapters of this plan.

Goal from last plan	Target	😊	😐	😞	Commentary
1. Build and expand the member community	Each quarter, all of the Board of Directors will promote AWE membership either via social media, speaking opportunities, at events and to colleagues in the greater business sector.		x		Partly. The first quarter is always easy, summer is always a gap. IMEX is a big boost. Advanced scheduling of BoD named tasks such as Facebook member group promotion has worked well.
	The Association will seek to employ a professional PR and marketing company to assist with promotion and developing a recognizable community "voice".	x			Yes - having professionals has really helped. Some question as to whether we have a recognizable community 'voice' though came through in member survey.
	The Association will set a goal to reach over 500 members in the first three years.	x			Yes - and no. Mostly due to sponsored memberships.
	AWE will build a dedicated Membership Committee to lead membership development.		x		Partly - more work needed. Requires ownership, focus and consistency.

	AWE will also build a dedicated Marketing & PR Committee to lead brand development.	x			
2: Forge strategic partnerships in the greater business arena	The organization will create a process to review all partnerships with the goal to be open minded and always have the best interest of the stakeholder for any potential in kind sponsorships and donations.		x		In principle, but more definition on ideal strategic partnerships would help.
	AWE will proactively seek out strategic partnerships that make sense for the organization. The organization will strive to work with businesses that hold steady to the mission and values of the organization.		x		Good partnerships confirmed, but we have been reactive to date.
	AWE will develop a strong business development and sales process.			x	Unclear principles have led to a challenge in process.
	AWE will develop a dedicated Sponsorship & Partnership Committee to vet possible alliances and forge crucial relationships in the industry.			x	No partnership committee.
3: Promote women's issues, awareness, and provide advocacy	The organization through education, networking, social media, outreach and other strategies will address women centric topics in a timely manner.		x		Elevate! Really does this. But we need more in educational programming. Webcasts are strong.
	AWE strives to take member needs seriously and will provide yearly surveys to members asking for			x	Yes we did a survey for strategic plan but have not for education. Surveying our members could be a huge initiative for 2020.

	feedback, topics, and assistance in developing education.				
	The organization will develop a Community Outreach Committee to act as a philanthropic arm supporting women in business (that may fall outside of the events industry).			x	Seems to be off mission
	The organization will strive to address all issues women face, even uncomfortable, unpopular, or tough topics.	x			Sexual harassment task force is a great example.
	AWE will develop best practices for employing women in events			x	Could this start simply and be a workshop at Elevate!?
	AWE will develop a code of ethics that will cover sexual harassment and workplace bullying.		x		Sexual harassment taskforce established but nothing yet on workplace bullying. Perhaps a 3rd party we can align to on this?
4. Develop and provide first class education and networking opportunities	The organization will approach like minded organizations to provide opportunities for our members that currently don't exist in the sector, for example, education and events.			x	Perhaps due to less than clear positioning of AWE alongside other organizations.
	AWE will develop curricula based on member's feedback and needs.		x		Yes for Elevate!, but otherwise we rely on our board members
	The Association will build educational opportunities that align with our mission.		x		Murky - salary neg was a success but we are not consistent due to bandwidth.

	AWE will develop an Education & Events Committee to vet potential sponsorships, develop education, and build networking opportunities for members.	x			Now two committees.
5: Celebrate the achievements of women and organizations that support them	AWE will develop a strategy to provide positive accolades to businesses that empower and promote women in events.	x			Another stream of this is to promote women into OTHER awards.
	AWE will develop a way to provide positive accolades to the individual achievements of women in events.	x			
	The organization will build an Awards Committee to take a look at ways to promote and applaud women/organizations in business.	x			
6: Establish a long term governance structure and succession plan	AWE will develop a long term plan for governance (including updating and improving bylaws), board of director roles and responsibilities, succession plan for leadership, and determining areas of authority.		x		We have created the Executive Director role but overall areas of authority are still not 100% clear.
	AWE will develop immediate and 3-5 year operating budgets and financial goals.			x	
	AWE will develop a plan in conjunction with budget for staffing the association.			x	

TOTAL	8	9	8	
				

Using all the intel gathered, the Association for Women Events presents the following clear vision, mission and goals to guide us from 2020-2022:

VISION

An inclusive community that empowers, elevates and advocates for all those who identify as women in the events industry, within which they flourish at all levels and in all roles.

MISSION

Membership of AWE is essential for anyone identifying as a woman to achieve professional success within the events industry.

GOALS

1. An events industry that supports women at all levels, in all roles
2. A sustainable organization with empowered leadership
3. A flourishing community of engaged members

VALUES

Integrity

The Association for Women in Events guides by example and the board, members, and associates of the organization are ethically, morally, and socially responsible. We endeavor to be the standard and role models to others in this sector.

Accountability

AWE Board members operate in an open and transparent manner, are accountable to each other and to our members and use trusted channels of communication and consultation to engage effectively with its stakeholders.

Inclusiveness

AWE is an inclusive community and is accepting of all who uphold our mission regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, social status, background, religion, or sexual orientation.

Transparency

The Association is an open, honest, and transparent organization for our board members, members, stakeholders and the greater events community at all times.

Persistence

AWE leaders persist in the pursuit of our goals. We are determined to achieve our mission, and approach challenges and opportunities with drive and vigour. We persevere even when times are tough. We ask for help, we support those around us and we are tenacious in our activities to serve our members.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES 2020-2022

To achieve our goals, first we measure them and then we prioritise initiatives in the short (1 year) and medium term (3 years) to achieve them.

Goal 1: An events industry that supports those who identify as women at all levels, in all roles

A bit about this goal: When we tell the story of how AWE began, or when we explain why AWE is needed we often use a narrative like 'there's so many women in the events industry, but not at all the levels that we'd like'. So this goal is about changing the narrative. It's about potentially putting us out of business at some future point because we no longer see that imbalance, or women are no longer stymied in their ambitions - whatever those might be.

Measures:

- **In 5 years, women represent 25% of the CSuite in the events industry**
- **In 10 years, women represent 50% of the CSuite in the events industry**
- **An active mentoring programme**
- **All major industry awards include nominations of or by AWE members**
- **In 3 years: 10% of AWE's members are not women**

Short term initiatives:

- Develop and publish best practices for employing women in events.
- Develop and publish a code of ethics that will cover workplace bullying.
- Establish a research project to understand the role of women in the events industry
- Establish a defined mentoring program led by members for members of all needs and backgrounds.
- Develop a task force dedicated to nominating women and men in the events industry for their contributions and achievements that support AWE's vision (alongside but aside from AWE's Hall of Fame Awards).

Long term initiatives:

- Ensure there is a shift in the employment of women 'at all levels'
- Create opportunities for men to actively participate in AWE

Goal 2: A sustainable organization with empowered leadership

A bit about this goal: much like every association, we want to ensure we're here for as long as our community and industry needs us. We want to make sure our team doesn't burn out, that the right skills are applied to the right initiatives and that our volunteers feel enabled and empowered to make the difference they wanted to, when they joined. We want to not worry about money, and have enough to fund the things that will serve our members and our industry well.

Measures:

- Sponsorship revenue is 1.5 x operating costs to allow for growth projects
- Membership revenue is at industry norms: 40%
- 100% of board members attend and contribute to 100% of meetings
- Paid staff are ultimately in place for key operation roles: Administration/Event Planning, Marketing and Executive Director.
- 20% of our membership community volunteer in some capacity

Short term initiatives:

- Develop a strong business development and sales process.
 - Create engaging sponsorship opportunities
 - Develop a non-dues revenue strategy
- Develop Volunteer Strategy
- Proactively seek out strategic partnerships that make sense for the organization in the short term
- Create opportunities for board professional development
- Develop immediate and 3-5 year operating budgets and financial goals
- Fully define roles and responsibilities within the organisation
- Define and deliver a customer service culture (we put members first)
- Establish data-driven strategies to enable decision making

Long term initiatives

- Confirm a long term governance and operational management framework
- Forge long term strategic alliances
- The President, Executive team and Executive Director are the brokers of ideas (not the source)

Goal 3: A flourishing community of engaged members

A bit about this goal: Well, it should probably be number 1! Growth is fine, but we want our members to be engaged with our mission, our programmes and with each other. We want the community to flourish, blossom and grow - out of the US and across the spectrum of the industry.

Measures:

- 900 members
- All continents represented
- 10% increase YOY for applications to the Hall of Fame
- 90%+ attendance at meet and greets
- Elevate! Reaches 350 attendees
- 50% of non members who participate in activities become members within a year

Short term initiatives:

- Provide education that will assist women in accomplishing their goals and objectives in the events space
- Develop measures for all our engagements and monitor them
- Celebrate the achievements of women and organizations that support them
- Develop first class networking opportunities and deliver them face to face, and virtually
- Expand the AWE member community

Long term initiatives:

- Position Elevate! As the pre-eminent annual event for women in the events industry
- Establish relationships with other organisations that can help us design and implement cutting edge, relevant educational programming for our members
- Establish benefits and programming that can be accessed by our global membership anytime, anywhere 24/7