Strategic Plan 2026–2029

Tropical Fruits Inc.

Organisational Details

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Executive Summary

Tropical Fruits Inc. is a member-based LGBTIQ+ arts and cultural organisation located in Northern NSW, with a proud 36-year legacy of producing inclusive, safe, and celebratory LGBTIQ+ cultural events.

Our vision is a vibrant regional future where LGBTIQ+ communities thrive creatively, culturally, and socially.

Over the next four years, Tropical Fruits will deliver impact across four strategic areas: **Artistic Programming, Community Development, Organisational Sustainability, and Sector Leadership**. These priorities directly align with NSW Government cultural funding objectives, including **regional equity, First Nations partnerships, youth development, accessibility, and arts sector growth**.

We aim to reach **over 5,000 participants annually**, employ and commission **over 100 regional artists each year**, and strengthen regional tourism by attracting visitors and generating local economic benefit through major events such as the Tropical Fruits New Year's Festival.

Guided by values of **inclusion, celebration, accessibility, and cultural safety**, this plan responds to the compounding crises of fires, floods, and COVID-19 that reshaped our region. Our strategy is to **rebuild, reimagine, and uplift LGBTIQ+ futures** through year-round artistic programming, intergenerational skill-sharing, cultural recovery, and place-based innovation that positions the Northern Rivers as a hub for LGBTIQ+ culture in regional Australia.

Vision

A world where LGBTIQ+ regional communities flourish through celebration, creativity, and connection; where LGBTIQ+ culture is central to a just, inclusive, and ecologically sustainable future.

Mission

To create safe and celebratory spaces for LGBTIQ+ people and allies through arts and culture; to foster connection and belonging in Northern NSW; and to uplift LGBTIQ+ creative voices through events, partnerships, and sector leadership.

Areas of Operation

1. **Artistic and Cultural Programming** – Seasonal and signature events including the New Year's Festival, Winter Fruit, Cabaret Nights, and regional LGBTIQ+ arts commissions.

2. **Community Engagement & Development** – Partnerships, peer mentorship, volunteer programs, LGBTIQ+ Elders and Youth initiatives, and First Nations collaborations.

3. **Governance & Organisational Development** – Board-led strategy, policy frameworks, human resource practices, and succession planning.

4. **Business and Operational Sustainability** – Financial diversification, sustainable community housing, post-flood infrastructure renewal, membership growth, and grant acquisition.

Audiences and Sector Development

Our core audiences are **LGBTIQ+ people, allies, artists, cultural workers, and intersectional communities** across the Northern Rivers and wider regional NSW.

We provide unique **regional value** by:
- Offering safe, accessible, celebratory spaces that do not otherwise exist in many rural areas.
- Generating tourism and economic activity, supporting local accommodation, hospitality, and retail sectors during major events.
- Delivering pathways for regional artists, cultural workers, and young people to develop professional skills and leadership.

- Acting as a cultural anchor for Northern NSW, strengthening resilience and connection in a community heavily impacted by natural disasters.

Tropical Fruits also contributes to the **statewide and national sector** by championing the role of LGBTIQ+ arts in cultural discourse, providing models of inclusive governance, and amplifying voices of First Nations, youth, elders, people with disability, and other underrepresented groups.

Summary of Achievements

- Delivered 35+ years of safe, inclusive LGBTIQ+ events, including our iconic New Year's Festival.
- Pivoted to resilience-based programming during bushfires, COVID-19, and the 2022 Lismore floods.
- Partnered with First Nations groups to co-design Welcome to Country protocols and visibility actions.
- Supported skills development for emerging LGBTIQ+ artists and volunteers.
- Established a digital strategy and community storytelling initiative to increase accessibility and hybrid programming.

Future Programs and Projects (2026–2029)

- Renewal of the **Tropical Fruits New Year's Festival**, with enhanced accessibility, climate resilience, and First Nations integration.
- **LGBTIQ+ Futures Lab** – Intergenerational residencies pairing emerging and established artists to develop regional LGBTIQ+ arts leadership.
- **Disability & Access Platform** – Codesigned programs by and for artists with disability and chronic illness, supported by access consultants.
- **LGBTIQ+ Youth & Elders Exchange** – Storytelling and legacy initiatives to strengthen intergenerational connection and wellbeing.
- **Creative Recovery Fellowship** – Commissioning new works in response to climate-related events, strengthening community resilience.

- Expanded **volunteer and peer-led pathways** into leadership, curatorship, and event production.
- **Sustainable Community Development Initiatives** – Investigate and invest in intergenerational housing projects and similar models to address the housing crisis, foster meaningful communities, and create safe, inclusive spaces for elders.

- **Measurable Outcomes:**
  - 15% annual increase in participation by people with disability.
  - 20 new regional artists commissioned over 4 years.
  - 25% growth in volunteer training and peer-to-leadership pathways.
  - Minimum of 5 First Nations co-designed projects annually.
  - Economic contribution benchmarked through annual tourism and participation data.

Internal & External Environment Analysis

Opportunities
- Growth in national and NSW-based LGBTIQ+ arts funding.
- Recognition of intersectionality and equity in arts programming.
- Rising demand for safe LGBTIQ+ cultural spaces in regional NSW.

Threats
- Climate change and extreme weather events (floods/fires).
- Rising insurance costs for events and infrastructure.
- Ongoing economic challenges for arts workers and regional communities.

Strengths
- Strong 36-year community legacy.
- Dedicated volunteer base and peer-led model.
- Established governance and cultural safety frameworks.

Weaknesses
- Post-flood infrastructure and funding constraints.
- Reliance on large-scale events for income.
- Limited long-term staffing and succession planning.

Stakeholder Consultation
- Community forums (2023–2025).
- Surveys with artists, volunteers, and accessibility advocates.
- Governance reviews with First Nations, Deaf, and disability advisors.

Governance & Accountability

Tropical Fruits Inc. is governed by a volunteer management committee elected annually. Governance structures include:
- **Committee roles**: Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Event Coordinator, and General Committee.
- **Subcommittees**: Events, Access & Inclusion, Arts & Culture, and Governance.
- **Policies**: HR, Financial Delegation, and Cultural Safety.
- **Advisory roles**: Recruitment of independent advisors with lived experience of disability, First Nations culture, and other marginalised identities.

Accountability to funders and community:
- Annual audited financial statements.
- Regular member/community consultations and surveys.
- Impact reporting on access, participation, and diversity outcomes.
- Independent governance reviews every three years.

Modern Workplace Conditions

We are committed to delivering workplace practices that reflect NSW Government funding priorities:
- **Fair Work compliance** – Contracts, pay, and entitlements.
- **Safer Spaces Policy** – Enforced at all events and within operations.
- **Access & Inclusion Plans** – For all staff, volunteers, and contractors.
- **Wellbeing support** – Peer support structures, trauma-informed practices, and mental health resources.
- **Equity leadership** – Flexibility, cultural leave, and pathways for underrepresented groups into leadership.

Risk Assessment

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation
Climate disaster (flood/fire)	High	Likely	Relocation plan, insurance, backup venues, climate adaptation projects
Funding shortfall	High	Possible	Diversification of income, multi-year grants, donor development
Volunteer	Medium	Likely	Succession planning,

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation
burnout			mental health support, workload management
Reputation damage (e.g., discrimination incident)	High	Unlikely	Code of Conduct, incident response policy, cultural safety training
Governance capacity (volunteer-led model)	Medium	Possible	Recruitment of independent advisors, succession planning, annual reviews
Workforce sustainability (staffing gaps)	High	Possible	Multi-year staffing grants, paid internships, strengthened HR frameworks
Loss of venue/infrastructure	High	Likely	Partnerships with councils, contingency venues, infrastructure investment

Strategic Goals and Indicators

Area of Operation 1: Artistic Output & Impact

- **Goal:** Increase local artist commissions.
    - **Measurement:** # of artists commissioned, diversity data.
    - **Community Impact:** Builds regional creative employment, retains talent in Northern NSW, and expands diversity of artistic voices.
    - **Targets:** Y1 – 10, Y2 – 12, Y3 – 14, Y4 – 16.
- **Goal:** Grow inclusive, multi-day festival.
    - **Measurement:** Attendance, audience feedback.
    - **Community Impact:** Increases cultural tourism, strengthens local economy, and enhances visibility of LGBTIQ+ communities.
    - **Targets:** Y1 – 1500, Y2 – 1600, Y3 – 1700, Y4 – 1800.

Area of Operation 2: Sector Development

- **Goal:** Host LGBTIQ+ artist residencies.

    - **Measurement:** # of residencies, publications, presentations.
    - **Community Impact:** Expands LGBTIQ+ cultural discourse, develops new regional creative voices.
    - **Targets:** Y1 – 2, Y2 – 3, Y3 – 4, Y4 – 5.
- **Goal:** Offer skill-sharing events.
    - **Measurement:** # of workshops, diversity of sectors engaged.
    - **Community Impact:** Builds community resilience and regional arts capacity.
    - **Targets:** Y1 – 4, Y2 – 6, Y3 – 8, Y4 – 10.

Area of Operation 3: Career Pathways

- **Goal:** Launch mentorship program.
    - **Measurement:** Mentors/mentees matched.
    - **Community Impact:** Provides sustainable pathways for youth, volunteers, and emerging artists into leadership.
    - **Targets:** Y1 – 6, Y2 – 8, Y3 – 10, Y4 – 12.
- **Goal:** Strengthen volunteer leadership.
    - **Measurement:** # of volunteers in leadership roles.
    - **Community Impact:** Supports workforce sustainability, skills development, and succession planning.
    - **Targets:** Y1 – 10, Y2 – 12, Y3 – 14, Y4 – 16.

Area of Operation 4: Governance

- **Goal:** Complete full governance review.
    - **Measurement:** Report & implementation percentage.
    - **Community Impact:** Ensures transparency, accountability, and best practice governance.
    - **Targets:** Y1 – 25%, Y2 – 50%, Y3 – 75%, Y4 – 100%.
- **Goal:** Increase board diversity.
    - **Measurement:** % representation (First Nations, disability, youth).

- **Community Impact:** Embeds inclusivity in decision-making and strengthens cultural safety.

- **Targets:** Y1 – 25%, Y2 – 35%, Y3 – 40%, Y4 – 50%.

Financial Summary

(Indicative – detailed figures to be provided in separate Budget Forecast document.)

Base	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4
Total Income	$500K	$650K	$700K	$750K
Total Expenditure	$490K	$640K	$690K	$740K
Surplus	$10K	$10K	$10K	$10K
Total Assets	$200K	$220K	$230K	$240K
Total Liabilities	$50K	$55K	$60K	$60K
Total Equity	$150K	$165K	$170K	$180K

Marketing and Communication

We will use a values-led, audience-responsive strategy prioritising:
- **Digital storytelling** and artist takeovers on social media.
- **Community media** – newsletters, local radio (2NCR, BayFM), podcasts.
- **Accessible communication** – plain English print, Auslan/video content, captioned media.
- **Hyperlocal outreach** – youth services, ACON, disability networks, and regional schools.
- **Statewide visibility** – partnerships with NSW arts bodies and LGBTIQ+ networks.

We will measure impact through participation data, audience feedback, and digital engagement analytics.

Appendix A: Alignment with NSW Arts and Cultural Funding Priorities

Priority	Tropical Fruits Activity
First Nations	Cultural protocols, Welcome to Country, First Nations commissions
Regional NSW	Based in Lismore; all programs regional
Next Gen	Youth mentorships, intergenerational projects
Broad & Inclusive	Access-focused programming, diverse representation
Accessibility & Equity	Disability-led curation, Auslan, low-sensory events