

San Antonio Film Commission  
2017-2022 Strategic Plan



**BACKGROUND**

Established in 1985, the San Antonio Film Commission has been dedicated to promoting film making in San Antonio for over three decades. Providing various services such as film permitting, calls for cast and crew as well as liaison services, the Commission seeks to act as a resource to the film industry and assist in its positive impact on San Antonio's economy.

Following the Texas Legislature's 84<sup>th</sup> regular session in 2015, film production in San Antonio and Texas as a whole faced an uphill battle in the efforts to attract and support projects. With a budget cut of roughly two-thirds, the Texas Film Commissions incentive fund was quickly depleted and could no longer incentivize film production in the State. Without a competitive state incentive program, the San Antonio film industry realized it was time for change.

In early 2016, the City of San Antonio and a group of film industry stakeholders began discussions focused on reviving the industry locally. Paired with staff transitions within the San Antonio Film Commission, the summer of 2016 was the prime opportunity to develop a strategic plan for the San Antonio Film Commission and redefine its direction and role to support the film industry.

**PROCESS**

Utilizing local facilitator, Mary Flanagan with Strategy & leadership LLC, the San Antonio Film Commission held strategic visioning and implementation sessions on June 25<sup>th</sup> and June 29<sup>th</sup> respectively. Attracting over 80 participants, the visioning session focused on identifying what must be done over the next five years to ensure the San Antonio Film Commission carries out its mission as well as where the San Antonio film industry and Commission should be at the end of the five years. Nearly 30 of the visioning session participants committed to assist in the development of key strategies and action steps to achieve the vision.

**VISION**

The half-day visioning session produced a winning proposition for what the San Antonio film industry will do both differently and better than any other community as well as a practical vision of what the industry would like to see in place in five years as a result.

Winning Proposition: San Antonio will be the most production friendly city in the US, celebrating our locations and cultural diversity while supporting the film industry with effective infrastructure, funding, marketing and professional development opportunities.

Practical Vision: The San Antonio film industry will have robust job creation; seamless interaction, collaboration and leadership with the City; a globally recognized film industry



presence; state of the art online presence; and abundant opportunities for continuing education and professional development.

Three Key Strategies were identified to achieve this vision and within each of the strategies participants developed success indicators that should be in place in five years if the vision is achieved.

Strategy #1: Ensure state and local film incentives are nationally competitive

- Productions specifically choose SA over other cities – because of incentives
- Local incentive increased from current 2.5%
- Local incentive is not tied to the state incentive
- At least two major film or TV productions (budget \$20M+) are attracted to San Antonio

Strategy #2: Invest, develop and maintain workforce and infrastructure needs

- More than one state of the art production facility is in use
- Multiple network & studio projects are able to film simultaneously and continuously
- Work force of full time film professionals increased by 75%
- An accessible database of workforce & equipment
- Additional higher educational programs supporting craft/tech fields are offered

Strategy #3: Enhance marketing to increase business opportunities and build a strong film culture

- San Antonio hosts a successful international, academy qualifying film festival and Film Convention
- Films are allowed to use City brands
- Businesses are investing in the local film industry
- San Antonio Film Commission has a new website with a 100% increase in traffic
- National advertising campaign is in place
- Local projects receive more recognition outside of San Antonio

## **ACTION PLAN**

In an effort to achieve the five year vision for the San Antonio industry, Implementation Session participants identified initial action items aimed at achieving these success indicators. Additionally, these participants committed their time and effort to see them through over the next 24 months.

1. Revise the current Supplemental San Antonio Incentive program
2. Redefine and fully staff the San Antonio Film Commission positions
3. Develop a new San Antonio Film Commission website
4. Develop a comprehensive inventory of local film resources
5. Conduct a film industry workforce needs assessment
6. Develop and launch a comprehensive marketing campaign



### Supplemental San Antonio Incentive Program (SSAI)

The San Antonio Film Commission, through the Department of Arts and Cultures, supports projects filmed in San Antonio through a 2.5% rebate on the amount of money projects spend local while filming. Currently, the main qualifier for this incentive is that projects must receive support from the Texas Film Commission incentive program in order to qualify for the SSAI. Due to the diminished funding at the state level, fewer projects are receiving support from the Texas Film Commission incentive program even though their project would have if the fund was fully funded. Under currently SSAI rules, those programs still can't receive the local rebate and little of the SSAI funding has been used over the past few years.

#### *Staff Recommendation:*

In order to make producing films in San Antonio more economically advantageous, staff and volunteers from the film industry will take on revising the SSAI. The two major changes include **removing the requirement of state support** as a qualifier for the SSAI as well as **increasing the rebate percentage to a minimum of 7.5%**. Rebate caps will be established to ensure no one project utilizes all available funding. Understanding that the state funding levels may not be returned to previous levels, projects that are unable to receive state support may be eligible for additional support.

### San Antonio Film Commission Positions

According to the Association of Film Commissioners International, the standard set of activities for film commissioners includes marketing locations, local crew, and equipment; leveraging incentive packages; providing scouting support services; assisting inbound productions and troubleshooting productions problems; and building a film-ready workforce and community. With both positions assigned to the Film Commission vacant, it is the prime opportunity to identify the appropriate level and job descriptions needed in order to bring on the right staff to accomplish these activities. Currently, the staffing compliment includes a Film Commissioner (Assistant Marketing Manager) and Locations Services Manager (Services Manager).

#### *Staff Recommendation:*

To better align the positions of the Film Commission and secure staff capable of implementing the Strategic Plan's key strategies and action plan, both job descriptions will be rewritten. The Locations Services Manager will take on a broader working title (yet to be determined) and the **job responsibilities will be expanded** to encompass not only the daily location and permitting services but also workforce development, technical assistance and marketing efforts as well. The Film Commissioner position will be upgraded to a Marketing Manager position with the intent **of attracting a higher level professional** with stronger marketing skills and the ability to serve as San Antonio's liaison to the national and international film industry. Components of this strategic plan will be included in their employee performance plans as an accountability measure.



### San Antonio Film Commission Website

During the Film Commission's tenure with the San Antonio Convention and Visitors Bureau, the domain [www.filmsanantonio.com](http://www.filmsanantonio.com) was utilized for the commission. With the transition of the commission to the Department Culture and Creative Development, the Film Commission's online presence was absorbed under the [www.getcreativesanantonio.com](http://www.getcreativesanantonio.com) domain resulting in a diminished web presence.

### *Staff Recommendation:*

**Reinstate the [www.filmsanantonio.com](http://www.filmsanantonio.com) domain** to increase the visibility of the Film Commission online. An increase in visits to the Film Commission's website will not only create more awareness of the commission itself and the efforts of the film industry, but also the array of services the Film Commission offers the industry. The new site would become the **primary resource for all productions considering filming in San Antonio.**

### Local Film Resource Inventory

Film production in San Antonio is a growing industry with professionals and resources that cross the spectrum of resources. The challenge the industry faces, however, is that the full capacity of these resources is not easily identifiable. There is not a singular repository of these resources. Developing a comprehensive resource inventory would quickly and easily inform out-of-state production of San Antonio's capability to support their project. Without this comprehensive inventory, productions are required to piece together resources to support their project.

### *Staff Recommendations:*

**Restructure the San Antonio resource directory and increase San Antonio's presence on the Texas Film Commission's directory of resources.** The existing local directory will be restructured to have greater interaction with the state directory, include locations, and a more streamlined process for adding resources. Strategies to increase the number of San Antonio listings in the Texas Film Commission's directory of resources include: engaging local film industry professionals through outreach with various trade organizations, setting up registration kiosks at various local film festivals and developing a marketing strategy for outreach. The goal is that the Texas Film Commission's directory of resources will include the full array of film production resources from sound stages and casting agencies to equipment and production locations for San Antonio. Utilizing the state's directory boosts visibility and enhances the greater Texas film industry as well. The new Film Commission website will provide a link to the Texas Commission's directory as well as instructions on searching for San Antonio specific resources.

### Workforce Needs Assessment

While the inventory will capture tangible resources necessary to the film industry such as camera and sound equipment, having knowledgeable and skilled crew to utilize that equipment is equally as necessary. Much of the expense an out-of-town production incurs is the cost to bring trusted crew to a location, covering per diems and hotel stays. Having a diverse workforce of skilled film industry



professionals capable of supporting full scale and/or multiple projects at one time is critical to elevating San Antonio's film industry.

*Staff Recommendations:*

Staff will engage local higher education institutions to **conduct a workforce needs assessment** of the film industry. The purpose of the needs assessment is to **determine the capacity of the film industry** to support full-scale productions and/or multiple productions at one time. Additionally, the assessment will establish gaps in the film industry workforce. With this knowledge, the Film Commission can work with these same higher education institutions to **develop the programs and curriculum** needed to fill the gaps.

Marketing Campaign

San Antonio is known internationally as a prime tourist location largely due to its historic landmarks and culture and attractions. Many of these visits are the direct result of intensive marketing of these amenities to families across the world.

*Staff Recommendations:*

San Antonio and its film industry seeks to be the first thought when considering where to film their projects. While local producers know and value the benefit of filming in San Antonio, projects coming out of major film markets such as Los Angeles and New York City may not be aware of all the San Antonio industry has to offer. Building on San Antonio's unique locations, diverse culture and growing film industry, **developing a comprehensive marketing** plan targeted toward the national and international film industry would elevate the visibility of the local film industry. The campaign would also highlight the efforts undertaken in this strategic plan: increased local incentive, capable film commission, robust production resource inventory and workforce, and direct projects to a seamless and informative Film Commission Website.

Other Recommendations:

Apart from the direction received from the film industry during the visioning and implementation sessions, staff has identified # action steps the Film Commission will take on in order to support the above recommendations.

1. To assist with implementation of the strategic plan, staff recommends **developing a Film Subcommittee of the San Antonio Arts Commission**. The San Antonio Arts Commission is a City Council appointed advisory board which currently has two standing committees: 1) Art Funding Committee and 2) Public Art Committee. Under the committee structure, an Arts Commissioner must serve as the chairperson to a subcommittee. Currently, two professionals represent the film on the San Antonio Arts Commission. One of these commissioners will serve as the Chair of the Film Subcommittee which will include additional members of the San Antonio Arts Commission as well as ad-hoc members of the Film Industry appointed by the San Antonio Arts Commission. The subcommittee's role is to serve in an advisory and accountability capacity.



2. Internally, the City organization has the ability to facilitate the Film Commission's vision of being a film friendly community. Film Commission staff will identify and **engage in an educational program for City departments**, informing high level staff of ways their department can support the film industry. This could include efforts such as permits, streamlining street closures, exploring economic development opportunities to attract pre/post production facilities or filming in facilities.
  
3. The efforts of this action plan are very important to the success and growth of the San Antonio Film industry. They can, however, only progress the industry so far without the continued support and partnership with the Texas Film Commission. Due to the fluctuation in funding levels at the state, the film industry is limited by the will of state officials every two years. Film Commission staff will work closely with Government and Public Affairs as well as local and state interest groups such as the Texas Motion Picture Alliance to **identify and support legislative changes to the Texas Film Commission's incentive program funding mechanism**. The success of peer states in utilizing a tax credit based program provides evidence of the need to revise the structure of the incentive in order to become more competitive.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

In the FY2017 Budget, an additional \$200,000 was included in the Department of Culture and Creative Development's budget to support the strategic plan. This funding will be used to support six initiatives that tie directly to the staff recommended action plan. The initiatives include: engaging in outreach to that national film industry, development of a new Film Commission website, enhanced workforce development, participation at national Film Festivals, development of a film production resource database, and conducting an industry needs assessment. The \$250,000 that the San Antonio Supplemental Incentive Fund receives remains in the FY2017 budget along with carry-over from previous years.

Film industry volunteers who assisted in the development of the strategic plan framework will continue to work collaboratively with the Film Commission to accomplish these initiatives. Updates will be provided to the Film Ad Hoc Subcommittee on a regular basis. City Council will receive briefings on the progress at the 12 and 24 month milestones.