

# Film Society of the Year Awards – How to Get Your Application Noticed

Do you want to apply for an award but are unsure where to start? Perhaps you have applied for an award in the past but got left behind on the shortlist? These guidance notes are to give you an insight into how the judges will review applications, and to maximise your chance for success.

## General Points

Take your time and decide where your application is best placed. Have you had a great year in terms of marketing and publicity, with press releases resulting in increased media coverage? Have you recently revamped your website? Have you pioneered a new community outreach project? Perhaps you have had a successful year across the board? Putting some time and thought into your application's strengths can pay off with positive results.

Accessibility is key, so make sure your application is well-structured and easy to read. This may sound obvious but it's worth spending time here. If you are including lots of supporting documents, an index, contents page or appendix plus numbered pages will help the judges find everything you want them to. Attractive and clear presentation will help to ensure you get your message across, though ultimately the judges will be looking at content.

Tips for good practice:

- PLEASE use a separate application form for each award entry (this really helps us on the admin).
- Provide good quality copies of supporting documents.
- Where possible, please send your application in electronic form (this enables the judges to consider the entries before meeting to make the all-important decisions).

## Supporting Statement

Your organisation's supporting statement is the most important part of the application. Take care to ensure it includes all relevant information and be sure to include a supporting statement for *each* category you apply for. Key points that the judges will consider:

- Does your supporting statement explain why you believe your application is worthy of an award?
- What challenges or obstacles has your organisation overcome in the last 12 months?
- Have you drawn attention to any new activities undertaken by your organisation?

## Other uses for your application

Consider other practical applications of your award entry. By applying for a Film Society of the Year Award you're pulling together a well-presented summary of your organisation's achievements. You can repurpose this information to support future funding applications and/or as an annual record of achievement that keeps your members and audience informed about your activities. This will help to remind them what is special about your organisation and why it is worth their continued support.

## Guidelines for each Award Category

The following is designed to give you a feel for the criteria by which your application will be assessed. It is based on an *ideal* application, so please don't be put off if you can't show evidence against each individual point.

### Best Film Programming

The judges will be looking for evidence of:

- A strategy to develop audience taste
- Use of a feedback system – for example, measuring audience reaction to films
- Diversity in your programming
- An inclusive programming strategy – where programming involves input from your members and/or audience
- A balanced programme including a variety of feature films, documentaries, animation, shorts and foreign-language titles
- Thought-provoking and challenging films
- Innovation and individuality – for example, inclusion of unusual or hard-to-obtain titles
- Introduced screenings/Q&As with special guest speakers
- Special events, seasons and festivals
- Programming that addresses the demographic in your area

Don't forget to include a copy of your latest programme and examples of any supporting material that you have produced, such as promotional leaflet for special screenings, seasons or festivals.

### **Best Programme Notes**

When applying for Best Programme Notes include as many supporting materials as you can. The judges will want to see a good variety of notes from over the last year. This helps them to get a fair and consistent account of your work. In particular, the judges will be pleased to see well-written and engaging notes that are accurate, pertinent and well presented. In addition, they will be looking for evidence of:

- A varied approach — for example, notes that meet the needs of different audiences
- Well-written film synopses (that don't give away the plot!) as well as extra background information on the film – e.g., critical reviews, interviews, credits, director statements
- Involvement of members/audience – e.g., direct invitations for audience feedback and publication of audience reactions from previous screenings
- Originality – have you written your own copy rather than simply copying and pasting from the internet?
- An innovative approach to distribution. For example, using web/email to distribute notes in advance of or following a screening
- General educational value

### **Best Marketing and Publicity**

When putting together your application for best marketing and publicity, include many examples of publicity material and press coverage over the past 12 months. In this category the judges will be looking for evidence of:

- Originality and innovation
- Resourceful budget management
- Stimulating and attractive materials
- Strong use of branding and identity
- Cross-media approach, e.g., local radio as well as local newspaper
- Effective use of email, website and social networking sites
- Wide distribution of publicity materials to appropriate outlets
- Effective use of press contacts and distribution lists/press releases

### **Best Website**

A well-presented and informative website is often the primary point of contact for your audience. Where possible, include screen shots, traffic data and information on resources available. The judges will be

looking for evidence that this is a useful and relevant resource for your members and audience. The site will be assessed according to its:

- Accessibility
- Availability of search functions?
- Multiple browser support
- Ease of navigation
- Attractiveness and clarity of design
- Relevance and breadth of information provided
- Readability
- Interactivity – is there a members' area or discussion forum?

### **Best New Society**

In this category, the judges will be looking at how your organisation has grown from an idea into a fully-fledged operation. They will be looking for evidence of:

- Strategic planning – do you have a first year strategy? Have you achieved your targets?
- Financial and organisational planning and sustainability
- Forward planning – future direction and aims for your organisation
- A clear sense of identity and purpose
- Examples of effective publicity and marketing materials
- Audience and/or membership numbers
- Audience feedback
- Programme notes, speakers, special events, social activities
- Reflection – challenges faced and overcome

Include supporting documents such as member and audience testimonials, marketing and publicity material, film programmes, programme notes and any other relevant information.

### **Best Student Society**

When preparing your application, include as much publicity, audience reaction and programming materials as you can in order to give the judges a well-rounded view of your organisation. The judges will be looking to assess:

- Breadth of programming designed both to entertain and challenge your audience
- Quality and relevance of marketing materials
- Seeking a level of audience feedback – is this taken into account when programming?
- Standard of website and social networking
- Social activities for members and volunteers
- Strategies for attracting new volunteers and committee members
- How you meet the challenges of running a venue with a fluctuating audience
- Audience retention after graduation – keeping in touch with alumni

### **Community Award**

In judging this award, BFFS will be seeking to find the organisation that demonstrates the best community interaction and involvement. This means looking beyond the existing loyal audience and embracing the potential of interacting with other community groups in your area. The judges will be looking in these areas:

- Service to the community – special events and screenings, activities, training and workshops

- Celebration of diversity and consideration of the community make-up demonstrated in your programming
- Outreach strategy to different and/or specific communities (it's fine to have focused on just one)
- Planned community-based projects
- Activity outside your own community

### **The Engholm Prize for Film Society of the Year**

The Engholm Prize is awarded each year to the film society or community cinema that has demonstrated excellence and innovation in all areas of operation. The prize is the highest honour that BFFS can bestow upon an organisation. When assessing this award the judges will take into account a holistic overview of an organisation's programming, programme notes, marketing and publicity, community activity and website. In addition, the judges will likely be looking for evidence of:

- An exceptional level of quality across all award categories (you may have evidenced this by applications in each category)
- Member and/or audience orientation
- Community-minded strategy
- Deliberate pursuit of excellence
- Triumph over adversity and/or challenging circumstances

### **The Film Society of the Year Awards Ceremony – 18<sup>th</sup> September 2010, Institut Français, London**

The awards ceremony celebrates the significant work and the excellence achieved by volunteers in cultural and community cinema. You will be given the opportunity to review the work of the award winners, spurring you forward to greater achievement in the future.

For more information and to read a history of the awards, go to [www.bffs.org.uk/awards](http://www.bffs.org.uk/awards).