



The Definitive Guide to Hosting a Vegan Film Screening

with support through a VegFund grant





Documentaries reveal powerful truths through storytelling

Community film screenings are an effective and entertaining way to reach a diverse (and, we hope, mainly non-vegan) audience with a powerful message about the benefits of veganism. Great documentaries engage the viewer emotionally through skillful storytelling while revealing truths that are often not apparent to the public eye.

VegFund offers funding for advocates worldwide to screen a variety of films, including *Love & Bananas*, *Dominion*, *Kangaroo: A Love-Hate Story*, *The Last Pig*, *Eating You Alive*, *A Prayer for Compassion*, and many more. Make sure you take a look at our [recommended films list](#). If you are interested in screening a film that is not on this list or would like to suggest a film to add, please feel free to [contact us](#).

We've put together this guide to walk you through the process of organizing a successful film screening that makes an impact in your community. Whether you are an experienced host or you are preparing for your first screening, we promise you'll find these tips valuable.

20 tips for organizing a successful film screening event

1.

Select a film and become familiar with the subject.

FILM SELECTION

First, learn about your target audience and set some goals as you consider what film to screen. What is their likely level of interest in the subject and format of the film? Is there content that will “turn them off” and defeat your purpose?

The nature of the film may influence how you plan your event program — for example, whether you have a Q&A session or a self-care room — and it could affect your venue requirements (How many people will it attract? Is this a good subject for a college audience?, etc.).

FILMMAKER RESOURCES

Visit the “Host a screening” or similar section of the film’s main website for screening information and license fees. Arrange to obtain a copy of the film *well in*

advance of your event date. Film websites sometimes also offer “screening packages” that include useful information and tools that will elevate your screening, such templates for promotional flyers and posters, photos, logos, advertising blurbs, and information on the film’s rating, subtitles, and talking points. Use these resources!

Many film distributors will send you a DVD or Blu-ray upon request; others will send you a link to a download or streaming site. Make sure you know what format your venue requires. Have the film in-hand and test it before the date of your event. Distributors of DVDs may need a minimum of 14 days’ notice to get a copy of the film to you.

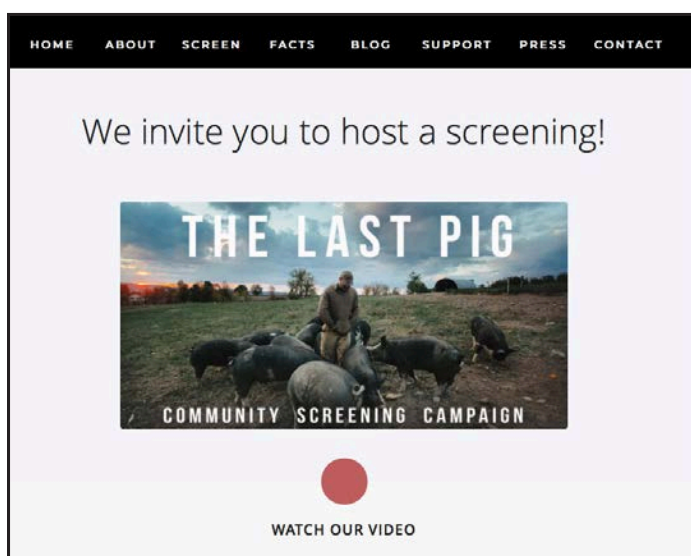
FILM RATINGS AND GRAPHIC CONTENT

Check the [film rating](#) in your country because classifications may differ by geographical location. For people under the age of 15, you can [download and adapt a consent form](#) for parents or guardians to sign to provide permission for that young person to watch the film. For especially graphic films, consider including a brief notification about the nature of the content in your promotional materials, especially if children might attend.

2.

Begin planning your film screening well in advance.

You’ll need sufficient time to find a location suitable for your audience, obtain and preview the film, and promote your event. A good ballpark is to plan your event a minimum of 6 to 8 weeks in advance of your screening date.





3.

Select the venue that is most suitable for your event.

You know your community better than we do, so you are in the best position to determine what kind of venue best suits your needs.

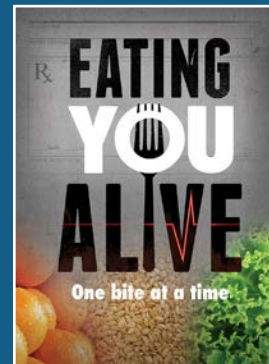
For smaller events, a variety of venues are available in most communities that typically don't charge high rental fees and offer spaces that are simple to set up: community centers, libraries, churches, schools and colleges, and recreation facilities. If you anticipate a large number of viewers, consider renting a public movie theater or event space in a museum or other cultural center. Some communities have summertime outdoor film venues. Contact the appropriate venue administrators to learn about availability and venue regulations.

Familiarize yourself with their technical requirements, screening and audio equipment, parking options, entrance ways, accessibility for attendees with disabilities, room capacity, seating options, lighting, safety considerations, and any additional space required for the Q&A panel, a food sampling, or a literature table. Consider using a venue that has a space conducive to socializing and networking before and after the film screening.

Eating You Alive + healthy lifestyle community education

Mei Liu, Lotus Health Foundation
Rochester Public Library, Rochester, Minnesota

Lotus Health Foundation (LHF) teamed up with the Rochester Clinic to host a free screening of *Eating You Alive* as one in a series of monthly health events in her community. To enhance the messages in the film, Certified Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP) facilitators and a diabetes prevention health coach were on hand to host the Q&A session. Physicians from the Rochester Clinic prepared an educational resource sheet for attendees.



Mei Liu held a cooking demo featuring vegan macaroni and cheese, kale salad, and plant-based cheese on whole-grain crackers and sliced cucumbers. She used this time to share the mission of LHF and the importance of promoting whole-food, plant-based diets as a sustainable way to approach the issues of lifestyle-related chronic diseases.

She promoted the event on the LHF website and Facebook page, in the community, and to patients at Rochester Clinic.

Cooking demos are always attractive! People struggle with cooking skills, ideas, and methods. Watching a movie is a fun way to grasp the concepts of healthy vegan eating, and having medical professionals to answer questions establishes credibility.

– Mei Liu



4.

Set an event goal – or goals!

You've chosen to screen a film for a reason. It contains important ideas that you'd like to convey to an audience. Consider what your objectives are in organizing this event and establish a few concrete goals. These goals might relate to the number of non-vegan attendees, sign-ups, veg pledges, or commitments to trying Meatless Mondays; the demographic makeup of your ideal audience; or evaluating your success with a follow-up survey.

5.

Make a budget and apply for a film-screening grant from VegFund.

Now that you've chosen a film and selected a suitable venue, it's time to budget and secure funding. Your budget should consider all costs related to the event, including (as applicable):

- Cost of the film license
- DVD shipping costs
- Venue-related expenses
- Food-sampling costs
- Literature costs
- Marketing and promotion expenses

Before applying for a film-screening grant from VegFund, review the [funding guidelines](#) to make sure that the expenses you're requesting are eligible. Once everything is clear, include your budget breakdown in your grant application.

You will be notified as soon as our team reviews your application. While we cannot guarantee that the applications will be reviewed within a specific timeframe, we strive to review grants within 4 weeks of receiving the application, so please plan accordingly.

6.

Select the day wisely.

The best day for hosting a film-screening varies geographically, depending on your city and local culture. Based on feedback from experienced activists, Thursday, Friday, and Sunday seem to be the popular days of the week in the United States. You may want to screen the film in association with another local event such as a festival, health fair, or holiday celebration.

7.

Find volunteers. Build your team.

Strength in numbers! If you're planning food sampling, audience Q&A, or a panel discussion in conjunction with the screening, you're likely to need assistance. Recruit volunteers and clearly define roles and responsibilities. Seek out the expertise you need, such as graphic design, marketing, public speaking, or social media. Small-scale screenings without all the "extras" work well too and typically require just a few organizers and volunteers.

Arrange for the group to meet in person for event planning sessions. Larger screening events may require a series of meetings. Make sure you have the phone numbers and email addresses of all the members of your team. Communication is key! Put together an email list to communicate quickly between meetings. Tools such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, or Facebook groups are useful for communicating with the team.



A Prayer for Compassion + vegan buffet

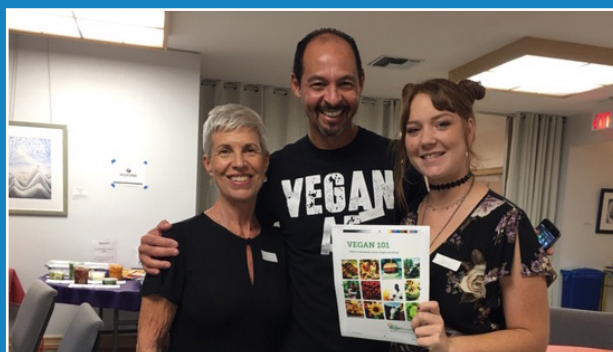
Gloria C. Nova-Fuson,
Nina D'Andrea, Jacqueline Woish
Unity of Sarasota church, Sarasota, Florida

This team of three held a Saturday evening screening of *A Prayer for Compassion* along with a cruelty-free vegan sampling buffet in the beautiful woodland setting of Unity of Sarasota. Thomas Wade Jackson, the filmmaker, joined the audience via Skype following the film for a discussion and Q&A session.



The organizers promoted the event through local businesses, media, and churches and achieved a good attendance. The buffet featured samples of a variety of homemade vegan treats.

This was a beautiful event for all who participated. Everything went as planned. I felt blessed. The most challenging aspect was getting non-vegan participants to come!
– Gloria C. Nova-Fuson



8.

Think through the details carefully and plan accordingly.

What will your event look like? Consider whether you want to make an introduction to the film, hold a Q&A session, or serve vegan food samples to your guests.

Plan to test the equipment you'll be using prior to the event. Experienced activists recommend doing a dry run at least two weeks in advance to make sure you have the right files, equipment, cables, adapters, etc. Another test on the day of the event is also recommended! You may find that you need a different program or file format or quality. Professional theaters may require specific formats, and if you're using subtitles, you'll need to use a different program to burn the DVD or BluRay with the subtitles on it.

If you will be streaming from a computer, there are important considerations. A strong and stable WiFi connection would be a must. If you're using a video file, be sure that you have the appropriate file size for your computer or device. Some video files are so big that they won't run on any computer. For those cases, you will need to reduce the file size or find another computer. Also, make sure you have the correct program to run the video and have the accurate format of the subtitles file (if applicable).

Walk through the venue and anticipate any bottlenecks. Is there room for people to wait before the doors open? Who will take tickets or check reservations? Will people be able to move smoothly between the theater or viewing area and food sampling or literature tables? Will you need microphones or stage lighting? Be sure to test these in advance if so.

Make a "day-of" checklist that includes team schedule reminders and technical checks (video and audio).



9.

Include a brief opening speech.

Aim for approximately 3–5 minutes. Welcome and thank your audience for attending, introduce yourself and your team, and give a brief overview of the event program. Finish with an introduction to the topic of the film, providing any additional details of importance (such as a warning about graphic footage and self-care recommendations). If you've invited a speaker or panel, introduce them and encourage the audience to stay for post-film presentations or questions.

10.

Consider bringing in speakers.

Film-screening events that include speakers are popular. Research local experts in subjects relating to the film you're screening (for example, animal rights attorneys, plant-based health/fitness specialists, etc.) For large events, you can even try inviting the filmmakers themselves — it doesn't hurt to inquire! If you can't find suitable speakers for your event, consider setting up a session via Skype (or another similar online video call platform), which is a common way to include filmmakers in your event.



If you have speakers at your event, provide them with a schedule. Are they speaking before or following the film? Will there be a break? Provide the necessary stage props (table, chair, water) and test audio equipment and lighting needs and management. Suggest a spot for speakers to watch the film if they wish, and discuss whether they would like to mingle with attendees following the screening.



11.

Include a post-film Q&A and/or panel discussion.

You have an audience, and they have questions! It's the perfect opportunity to speak with them. Define the length of the Q&A session as part of your event planning considerations. Otherwise, people may take more time than you had planned for your event. Panel discussions or Q&A sessions typically take place immediately after the film has ended. A short break is sometimes offered, but be aware that it's likely to cause you to lose audience members who don't return after the break.

Read our [Post film-screening discussion guide](#) for guidance on conducting a successful Q&A and/or panel discussion. Keep it focused and positive -- and be sure that you or your speakers are prepared for challenging questions and comments from the audience.

12.

Consider a social area if space permits.



A film screening is a natural forum for engaging with audiences. Use the event as an opportunity to connect with film-goers and to reinforce the message of the film. A social space is ideal for doing just that.

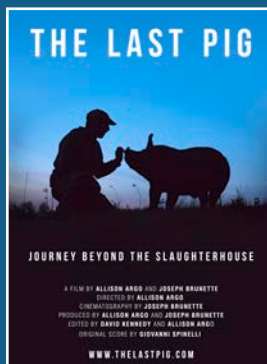
Look for venues with a comfortable space where event attendees can gather, socialize, and network. This space can double up as a "chill-out zone" if members of the audience need to leave the screening for a break or reprieve from difficult content. Lay out educational literature and have volunteers on hand to answer questions. Consider offering vegan snacks and beverages. Food never fails to draw folks.



The Last Pig + Akron Community Wellness Event

Heather Broholm, Happy Trails Animal Sanctuary
Akron-Summit County Public Library, Akron, Ohio

Heather Broholm and her two teammates strategized to combine a free screening of *The Last Pig* in the city library with a number of appealing activities to attract a large and a non-vegan crowd. The event included a yoga class with live music; vegan food sampling from local restaurants and grocery stores; a raffle of vegan cookbooks and restaurant gift cards; a special guest appearance by Mandy, a rescued pot-bellied pig; and a post-film discussion via Skype with film director Allison Argo.



The food samples from local restaurants and groceries included vegan smoothies, pizza, cookies, tofu and falafel, vegan cheeseburgers and coleslaw, vegan chicken nuggets, Hippeas, chia seed pudding, carrot spirals with peanut dressing, chocolate banana almond milk, raspberry fruit and date snacks, granola, and more!

The event received rave reviews from attendees, as did the vegan treats, Mandy the pig, and Q&A with Allison Argo.

The most challenge aspect was devising messaging and crafting an event to attract non-vegans, as well as the footwork required to obtain local sponsorship and food donations. Plan ahead!
– Heather Broholm



13.

Sample delicious vegan food!

Film screenings usually pair well with food sampling. Consider showcasing a selection of delicious vegan food. Based on activist feedback, we recommended that you hold your food sampling after your event so you can close on a positive (and tasty) note and give film spectators the opportunity to meet and talk with other attendees, speakers, and your volunteers about their experience.

Check out VegFund's [Sampling food at your event?](#) guide for important food-sampling guidelines, including food-handling safety. You'll also find a selection of recommended recipes and vegan food products for these types of events. (Note that you can apply for a film screening and food sampling in a single application in VegFund's grant management system.)

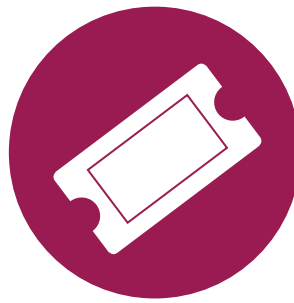


14.

Provide self-care information to yourself and your guests.

If the film you're screening includes graphic footage, inform yourself about self-care recommendations that you can share with your audience prior to showing the film (preferably during the opening speech).

For some films with particularly difficult content to watch, such as *Dominion*, a [self-care guide](#) (or something similar) can be offered at the beginning or end of the screening event. The Dominion Movement provides a self-care guide specific to the movie, which we highly recommend. You might also consider arranging an area in the lobby or a social space where audience members can step away from the film with volunteers on hand to comfort them or to talk through their distress.



15.

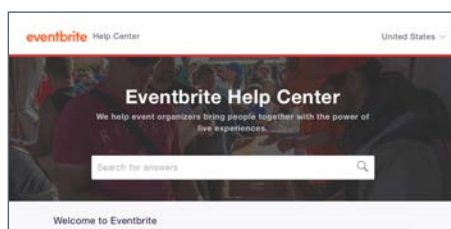
Determine whether your event will be free or paid admission. Consider "Suggested donations."

If you're planning for free admission to your film screening, consider providing attendees with the option of a "suggested donation." Determine in advance how the funds will be used, and publicize this to the audience in your promotions and at the door. Donations can be used to help cover your costs or to support organizations whose missions are aligned with the film's topic (such as animal sanctuaries, environmental causes, human health/nutrition services).

16.

Use a ticket service for larger crowds. Request registration for smaller groups.

Consider using the free [Eventbrite app](#), which is highly recommended by experienced activists. This service provides event listings and assistance with online ticket payments, processing, emailing, sales tracking/analytics, and additional support. Online ticket purchase has the advantage of allowing you to anticipate how many people will attend and adjust your plans if needed, or to limit ticket sales relative to the capacity of the venue.



[QR codes](#) are helpful if you have online tickets and can be added to posters and/or leaflets that promote your event.

Recognize that overbooking could be a problem. There is no guaranteed formula for preventing it, but requiring registration to attend and emphasizing that space is limited can help avoid it. For small events, requesting an RSVP may suffice. Regardless, promote your event right up until it's happening! With free screenings, no-shows are a given.



Love & Bananas + guest speaker from an elephant advocacy group

Amy Bedard, Rosebury Workshop,
4 Wing Theatre, Cold Lake, Alberta, Canada

First-time VegFund grantee, Amy Bedard, held a free event titled "Trumpet Loud" with a film screening of *Love & Bananas* and presentation and Q&A by guest speaker Mary-Ann Holm, president of [LEAP for Lucy](#). Amy's goal was



to educate her community about the plight of Asian elephants. The well-attended event included informational displays on endangered elephants and art from the "Freedom for Elephants Collection" of Rosebury Workshop.

*This cause is very dear to my heart.
I've never done anything like this before,
but we had a very successful event.
The audience was very engaged in the Q&A,
and they were interested in getting involved
with helping endangered elephants.*
– Amy Bedard



17.

Promote, promote, promote (to non-vegans!)

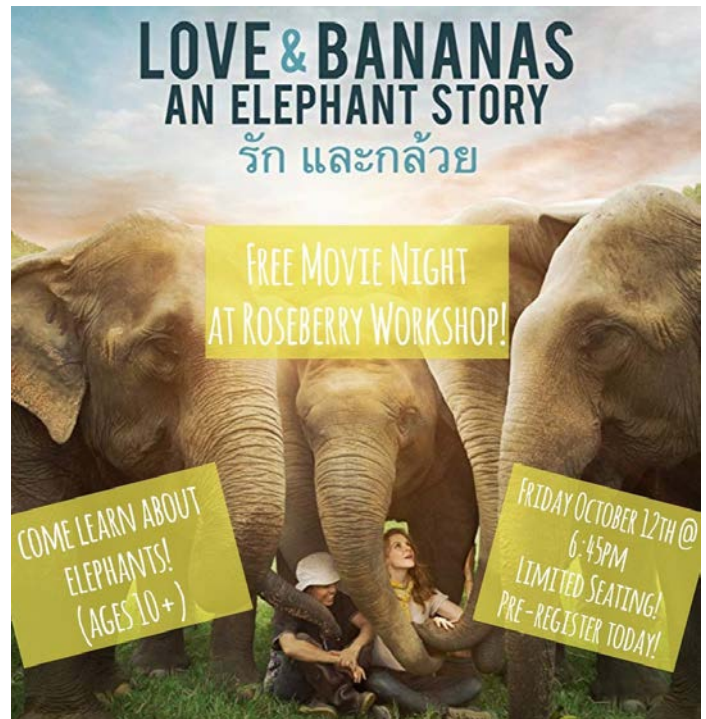
Get the word out about your film screening. Focus heavily on online and media promotions in the interests of minimizing paper use, but posting flyers or posters in key locations to catch the attention of your target audience is invaluable. Many film producers provide templates for posters that you can customize with your own event details. Some also provide a list of screening locations on their website, so be sure to send them your schedule to be included.



Our grantees report that attracting non-vegans to their events is one of their biggest challenges — and that’s what it’s all about, right? Find locations in your area frequented by non-vegans who might be intrigued by the subject matter: health food stores, gyms, community centers, high schools, and colleges. Include all of the relevant details about tickets, reservations, location, times, film duration, subtitles, film rating, and contact information — and highlight special draws such as food sampling (everyone loves free food), speakers, raffles, benefits, etc. For more ideas, check out [VegFund’s Tips for event promotion](#).

Don’t underestimate the power of word-of-mouth. Ask your team to spread the word to friends, family, and colleagues and to share the event on social media. Use Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Create your own branded hashtag and post all the details and appealing visuals. If you have a website, use it! Post your flyer, web banner, or event announcement and ask visitors to spread the word.

Make use of VegFund’s [Event Calendar](#). When you apply for a grant, you’ll find an option on the form for listing your event on our website. Note that you can also request a “call for volunteers” in the calendar listing.



18.

Get press coverage/listings.

Get your event listed in the calendars of your local entertainment paper or website. Contact the local press to inform them about your event. They may not cover it in full, but any mention in lead up to the date is a plus.

For large screenings, create a brief press release with event details and highlight notable speakers or other interesting aspects of your event. If you are using a theater venue, check to see if they’ll list your event in their publicity.

Media coverage can help take your event outside of the room and reach the hearts and minds of many more people!



19.

Document your event!

SIGN-UP SHEETS

Take note of the number of attendees and consider putting out a sign-up sheet or tablet to collect names and contact details of people who are interested in future events you might host. Hint: If you are awarded a film-screening grant, you'll need to provide this sort of documentation in your follow-up report.



RECEIPTS

Make sure to save your receipts. You'll also need them to get reimbursed!

PHOTOS AND VIDEO

Take photographs! Good-quality photographs will be useful for your online event recap or future events, and they provide VegFund with the content we need to showcase your outreach. If possible, find a professional photographer who can document your event for free or a volunteer who has the necessary equipment and skills. You and the other volunteers will be busy with many things during the event. Of course, take additional snapshots as you go because they may come in useful. Close-ups and photos with strong focal points are ideal. Short videos are an added plus with potential for social media.



20.

Evaluate your success.

To understand the impact of your event, think in advance about how you will [measure the effectiveness](#) of your film screening. Consider conducting a brief survey of your attendees. A simple paper survey can be left on each seat during the screening, or perhaps ask for a show-of-hands in response to a few questions following the screening. Keep it brief, but be sure to include a question or two relating to their current food choices and receptiveness to a plant-based diet. Plenty of room for comments is always a good idea.

These questions are available on a downloadable [event survey](#) document website that you can adapt to your needs.

If you are holding a Q&A session, recording or documenting audience responses and questions can be a part of your evaluation.

Reflect

You did it! Congratulations! Give yourself and your team of volunteers, a pat on the back.

Meet with your team of volunteers to celebrate! Exchange experiences and reflect on what did and didn't work during the running of your film-screening event. It's all about trial and error. Each stage of every event provides a learning opportunity that serves as the basis for improving future events. Take notes!

For additional inspiration, check out our [Activist Stories](#) featuring VegFund grantees who have organized successful film-screenings in their communities.

If you're ready to take the next step, take a look at our [Film-Screening grant](#) page. And, if you're ready to jump right in, [apply now!](#)



Since its inception in 2009, VegFund has provided thousands of vegan activists with grant support for community outreach events, such as film screenings.

For approved grants, VegFund will fund associated film-screening licensing fees and will consider partial or, potentially, full reimbursement for other related screening costs, including but not limited to, the venue rental, food-sampling items, and educational literature. Please note that speakers' travel costs or honoraria for events are not refundable.



If you have any questions or need additional information, please [contact us](#). We look forward to hearing from you!