



International **Photography** Assoc. Festivals

Practical Guide: Education and Cultural Mediation in Photography Festivals (2026)¹

This document is presented as an open draft intended to foster collective reflection on how education and cultural mediation can be strengthened as structural dimensions of the contemporary organisation of photography festivals. At the International Photography Festivals Association (IPFA), we understand that the professionalisation of the sector depends not only on artistic quality, production capacity or international visibility, but also on the way festivals generate meaningful contexts for interpretation, participation, cultural activation and connection with their audiences.

This guide is not conceived as a closed or mandatory set of rules, but as a proposal of shared principles and progressive guidelines that each festival can adapt according to its scale, geographical context, audience profile and available resources. We recognise that educational frameworks, mediation devices and relationships with audiences take diverse forms depending on the institutional, cultural, social and territorial conditions in which each festival operates. Diversity of approaches is one of the strengths of our network. What we propose is not a standardisation of practices, but a greater awareness of the central role that mediation, audience activation and relational processes can play in building festivals that are more accessible, more relevant, more hospitable and more connected to their contexts.

From this perspective, cultural mediation can also be understood as a tool for strengthening cultural rights: the right of individuals and communities to access,

¹ This document incorporates contributions derived from [Aula Expandida](#), research by Juan Carlos Rodríguez Ogarrio, whose reflections on teaching and photography have contributed to expanding the conceptual framework of this guide.

interpret, participate in, create meaning from, and actively engage in cultural life. In the context of photography festivals, this implies recognizing that the relationship with images, visual narratives, and exhibition spaces should not be limited to specialized audiences, but rather open up to diverse forms of experience, knowledge, and participation.

Throughout this guide, education and cultural mediation are understood as broad fields that cut across multiple dimensions of the festival. They are not limited to guided visits, workshops or support materials, but also encompass the way exhibitions are designed, curatorial discourses are articulated, the reception of works is accompanied, relationships with specific communities are sustained, and conditions are created so that diverse audiences can approach photography through experience, critical reflection, active participation and the co-construction of meaning.

This broad understanding of education allows us to situate photography festivals within a learning ecosystem that extends beyond formal, regulated, or degree-granting education. Many festivals also operate within the realm of non-formal and informal education, creating learning spaces based on experience, practice, skills acquisition, peer exchange, and the development of critical thinking. In this sense, festivals do not replace traditional educational institutions, but they do actively participate in contemporary processes of cultural, artistic, and professional development, especially where learning occurs through doing, encounters, experimentation, and direct interaction with artists, audiences, and communities.

Likewise, this guide recognises that practices of mediation, audience activation and community engagement are deeply shaped by material, institutional and territorial inequalities. In many Global South contexts, and in other territories marked by structural fragility, discontinuity of cultural policies or limited resources, education cannot be conceived as a secondary supplement, but as a central tool for sustaining the festival's public purpose, broadening its social rootedness and building lasting relationships with communities, schools, collectives, neighbourhood spaces and audiences that have historically been left outside certain cultural circuits.

This guide can also progressively align with the United Nations 2030 Agenda through the identification of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) most directly related to each section, especially those linked to quality education, the reduction of inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, and partnerships to achieve common goals. Reference to these frameworks can help festivals situate their practices within a broader international perspective and communicate more clearly their commitment to a culture that is more inclusive, formative and socially meaningful.

We invite all IPFA members to read, debate, question and enrich this document. Education and cultural mediation should not be understood as accessory functions, but as ongoing processes of listening, translation, contextualisation and the construction of shared meaning that can decisively strengthen the social and cultural role of photography festivals.

1. Education and Mediation as Structural Principles of the Festival

Cultural mediation and processes of audience activation constitute a structural dimension of the festival and form a central part of its programming, its public orientation and its long-term projection. When progressively integrated into planning, programming and evaluation, they directly shape curatorial work, relations with artists, audience development, communication, partnerships, and the project's territorial and international positioning. To understand mediation as an organisational axis is to recognise that every institutional decision shapes an experience and expresses a position: from the presentation of works and the language of texts to the accessibility of spaces, the diversity of voices convened, the transparency of processes and the proposed forms of participation. Within this framework, mediation does not merely transmit information, but generates conditions for experience, critical thinking, cultural appropriation, community building and the shared production of knowledge. Mediation doesn't appear at the end of the process, once the program is finalized, but rather participates in the very definition of the festival. Its function is not only to translate established discourses, but also to help the project become more aware of its frameworks of legitimation, its conditions of access, and how it distributes visibility, engagement, and recognition.

Incorporating this perspective strengthens the festival's public credibility and responds to a growing demand from artists, communities, funders, educational institutions and audiences, who expect projects capable of producing shared cultural value beyond the temporality of the event. This does not require immediate transformations, but clarity of intention, gradual planning and a long-term vision that understands mediation, audience activation and relational dynamics as part of an ecosystem of exchanges, processes and learning sustained throughout the year. In contexts of limited resources, this approach requires defining priorities, adopting realistic paces, and avoiding the indiscriminate proliferation of activities. The relevance of a festival does not depend on the number of events it programs, but rather on its capacity to articulate coherent, situated, and sustainable experiences, as well as on the processes, connections, and forms of participation it manages to activate and sustain over time. From this perspective, education and mediation help the festival move beyond being understood solely as an event and allow it to also be understood as a process, a community, and a space for cultural construction. It is not just about expanding audiences, but about transforming the relationship between institution, artwork, and society, recognising that the artistic experience can also be an experience of dialogue, interpretation, conflict, learning, and participation.

→ **Education and mediation become meaningful when they structure the festival as a process, a community and an ecosystem, and not merely as a set of activities parallel to the event.**

Examples and practical recommendations:

1. Include mediation and audience activation as a specific item in planning meetings.
2. Draft a brief statement of principles aligned with the festival's mission.

3. Appoint a person or team responsible for coordinating this area.
4. Incorporate mediation and participation objectives into annual planning.
5. Review programming from the perspective of audiences, accessibility and cultural hospitality.
6. Think about mediation from the outset of curatorial design and integrate it into internal evaluation processes.
7. Define which communities or audiences the festival wishes to accompany in the medium term.
8. Establish stable partnerships with educational, cultural and territorial agents.

2. Open, Dialogic and Situated Mediation Practices

Mediation and activation practices in photography festivals are strengthened when they are grounded in open, dialogic and situated frameworks that understand participation as a process of interpretation, the comparison of experiences and the shared construction of meaning. From this perspective, mediation does not simply explain works, but enables conversation, doubt, relationship, shared interpretation and, where appropriate, co-creation, while also recognising that audiences do not merely receive content but also produce readings, knowledge and situated understanding. This requires acknowledging the constitutive diversity of audiences: each person arrives with distinct memories, references, sensitivities and conditions, which mediation can welcome and incorporate as an active part of the experience.

Understood in this way, mediation does not seek to close off interpretation, but rather to make it more conscious, more complex, and more shared. This requires abandoning the idea of the public as a passive recipient of content and recognizing it as an interlocutor, a producer of interpretation, and a subject of experience. In the field of photography, this issue is especially important because every image implies a way of seeing, a point of view, and a specific relationship between visibility, representation, and reality. Mediation can contribute precisely to questioning these relationships, problematizing the frames from which we see, and challenging the meanings that images organize and naturalize. At the same time, situated mediation implies recognising that the same processes are not activated in every territory, nor with the same resources, nor in response to the same social or cultural urgencies. For this reason, a festival must adapt its tools to each context, articulating local rootedness, global connectivity, exchange between diverse realities and networked learning. Within this framework, photography should not be understood only as a technique or artistic language, but also as a tool for reading, narrating, questioning and sharing the world. Hence, the importance of designing experiences that move beyond passive reception and allow for participation, experimentation, debate and the placing of images in relation to social life. Conceived in this way, mediation ceases to be a secondary function and becomes a practice capable of redistributing voice, broadening participation and opening space to those who have historically had less presence within cultural circuits.

→ **Cultural mediation gains depth when it transforms the audience into an active agent and turns learning into a situated, dialogic and shared process.**

Examples and practical recommendations:

1. Design activities based on questions, interpretive openness and the shared construction of meaning.
2. Promote horizontal conversations between mediators, curators, directors, artists and audiences.
3. Adapt mediation devices to the particularities of the territory and to participants' experiences.
4. Recognise the prior knowledge of audiences and incorporate it as an active part of the process.
5. Favour participatory methodologies in visits, workshops, talks and encounters.
6. Allow multiple interpretations without imposing a single reading of the works.
7. Incorporate doubt, listening and reflection as constitutive parts of mediation.
8. Open up, where relevant, dynamics of co-creation, the production of one's own readings and shared decision-making.

3. Access, Inclusion, Cultural Democracy and Audience Development

Cultural mediation and audience activation practices can only be considered solid when they are articulated through real attention to access, participation and the concrete conditions under which different audiences can take an active part in the festival. The cultural value of a festival is expressed both in the quality of its contents and in the breadth, diversity and accessibility of the forms of participation it proposes. Economic, physical, geographical, linguistic, symbolic, and technological barriers persist, limiting many people's connection to photography festivals. Therefore, working towards inclusion involves more than simply facilitating entry; it also means exploring how diverse individuals and communities can experience the festival, understand its codes, feel engaged by its offerings, and actively participate in its spaces for experience and interpretation. This requires building genuine conditions of hospitality, recognition, and participation, capable of making diverse audiences feel truly welcome, involved, and engaged.

From this perspective, cultural mediation also contributes to a democratic understanding of the festival. Democracy here should not be understood solely as an increase in the number of attendees, but as the real possibility for diverse audiences to participate in cultural life, critically interpret images, recognize their own experiences in the narratives presented, and exercise an active form of cultural citizenship. A democratic festival is not only one that opens its doors, but one that revises its language, hierarchies, forms of legitimation, and conditions of participation so that more people can feel empowered to observe, ask questions, debate, create meaning, and participate in the cultural conversation.

In this context, audience development should not be reduced to recruitment, communication, or attendance-boosting strategies. Developing audiences involves

creating conditions that allow diverse individuals and communities to cultivate familiarity, trust, critical thinking, a desire to participate, and a sustained relationship with photography and the festival. It is not simply about attracting visitors to a specific edition, but about supporting long-term processes through which audiences recognize themselves as interlocutors, participants, and co-creators of cultural life. Audience development is, therefore, an educational, relational, and democratic endeavor.

This requires reviewing not only formats, but also the codes of cultural legitimation operating within the sector. A festival can be artistically excellent and yet exclusionary if it addresses only those who already command certain cultural languages or habitually participate in particular circuits. In this sense, diversity should not be reduced to formal or symbolic representation, but translated into concrete decisions about schedules, prices, languages, care, sensory accessibility, reading formats, forms of support and sustained links with specific communities. Opening the door is not enough: it is necessary to transform the conditions of entry, permanence and participation. Inclusion, therefore, does not constitute an additional burden, but a structural condition for the festival's cultural experience to be richer, fairer, more relevant and socially more legitimate.

→ **The cultural relationship that a festival proposes only truly expands when access, diversity, cultural democracy, and audience development become concrete priorities and not just discursive ones.**

Examples and practical recommendations:

1. Ensure free admission or reduced prices for part of the programme to broaden access.
2. Incorporate multilingual communication and mediation materials in clear and accessible language.
3. Design activities taking physical, sensory and cognitive barriers into account.
4. Offer proposals adapted to different ages and levels of familiarity with photography.
5. Schedule activities at different times to broaden participation.
6. Work with schools, associations and collectives that do not usually attend festivals.
7. Create specific formats for children, young people and older adults.
8. Offer grants, invitations or exemptions for paid activities, and assess which audiences continue to be left out and why.

4. Photographic Mediation, Critical Reading and Exhibition Design

Photographic mediation within the framework of a festival opens spaces for critical reading, situated conversation and the shared construction of meaning around images, exhibitions and the contexts in which they circulate. In a scenario marked by visual saturation, the accelerated circulation of images and the growing automation of their production, photography can operate not only as an artistic language, but also as a tool for interpreting the environment, creating a new way of seeing, problematising reality and articulating critical thought. This requires strengthening the ability to analyse images, understand their contexts, identify their frameworks of representation and ask

about their social, political and affective effects. Mediation plays a decisive role here by helping audiences develop criteria for reading images, discussing them and situating them historically, while also recognising that every image constructs a point of view and activates an ethical and cultural responsibility.

This critical dimension also depends on the conditions of reception that the festival itself constructs. The selection of works, their sequence and scale, spatial design, wall texts, the relationship between image and context, and the way the route welcomes, guides or conditions participation turn the exhibition space into an active device of mediation. A clear and sensitive display expands the possibilities of reading without simplifying the works, and can be reinforced through mediation notebooks, tactile materials, activation prompts, sound resources, route maps, spaces for pause, or simple digital tools. To participate in a photography festival today thus means learning to live critically with images and with the cultural frameworks that make them visible.

→ **Photographic mediation gains depth when it articulates critical reading, exhibition design and conditions of reception capable of activating interpretation, conversation and the shared construction of meaning.**

Examples and practical recommendations:

1. Integrate image analysis into mediation activities and visual literacy work.
2. Relate exhibitions to social, historical or territorial debates whenever relevant.
3. Promote questions about who looks, who represents, and from where an image is constructed.
4. Design mediations that connect works with the contemporary experiences of audiences.
5. Create spaces for discussion about ethics, representation, public image and the social uses of photography.
6. Think of the exhibition route as a learning experience with different levels of reading.
7. Write clear, rigorous and accessible wall texts, accompanied by appropriate support materials.
8. Coordinate the work between curating, design, communication and mediation, and incorporate spaces for conversation, pause and extended observation.

5. Professionalisation, practical learning and active participation

Photography festivals are not aimed only at audiences who visit exhibitions, attend conferences or participate as spectators. They also bring together an audience made up of photographers, emerging artists, beginners, students, people at an introductory stage and creators who seek to activate, develop or professionalise their practice. For many of them, the festival is not only a space for cultural reception, but also an opportunity to learn, experiment, show their work, receive guidance, expand networks and become an active part of a photographic community.

From this perspective, professionalisation must be understood in a broad sense. It is not limited to accessing the art market or consolidating a professional career, but includes the progressive development of skills, criteria, methodologies, personal

languages, production tools, communication capacities and forms of insertion into the photographic ecosystem. A festival can support these processes by offering spaces in which to make, think, share, test, make mistakes, receive feedback and better understand the conditions of circulation of contemporary photography.

Workshops, laboratories, portfolio reviews, active walks, observation exercises, collaborative practices, encounters with artists, editing sessions, publishing spaces, photobooks, analogue processes, installations or explorations in public space can become devices for learning and professionalisation when they are articulated through clear objectives and conscious forms of accompaniment. In these contexts, knowledge is not transmitted only vertically, but is built through practice, experience, dialogue, trial, error and exchange between participants with different levels of experience.

This dimension is especially important because many festivals function as spaces of non-regulated, non-formal and informal education. Their value does not necessarily lie in awarding qualifications, but in creating conditions for people to develop real capacities within the photographic field. Learning how to edit a series, present a project, write about one's own work, engage in dialogue with curators, understand an open call, produce an exhibition, circulate a publication or sustain a practice over time are fundamental forms of learning that festivals can facilitate in a situated and accessible way.

Recognising photographers and creators in training as part of the festival's audience allows us to expand the very idea of mediation. Mediation does not only accompany those who approach an exhibition, but also those who wish to participate actively in the photographic field. In this sense, professionalisation can be understood as a form of specialised mediation: a mediation oriented towards activating trajectories, strengthening practices, building confidence, opening up possibilities for participation and creating more lasting bonds between the festival and its creative communities.

→ A festival strengthens its educational role when it recognises photographers, beginners, students and emerging artists as active audiences, and offers them tools to learn, experiment, professionalise themselves and participate in the photographic ecosystem.

Examples and practical recommendations

1. Design workshops in which making, thinking, researching and sharing form part of the same learning experience.
2. Include activities aimed at beginner photographers, students, emerging artists and people at an introductory stage.
3. Offer portfolio reviews, mentoring, feedback sessions or accompaniment spaces adapted to different levels of experience.
4. Create laboratories for editing, sequencing, visual storytelling, project writing and presentation of work.
5. Include sessions on open calls, production, circulation, publishing, professional sustainability and the economics of cultural work.

6. Recognise the value of the non-regulated education offered by festivals, centred on skills, processes, networks, critical criteria and situated forms of learning.
7. Enable participants to be not only attendees, but active agents of the festival through collective exhibitions, presentations, publications, collaborative processes or open activities.

6. Community, Territory and Proximity Mediation

The relationship between a festival and its surroundings should not be built solely through the temporary occupation of cultural spaces. Education and mediation can foster a deeper insertion into the life of the territory by strengthening ties with schools, neighbourhoods, collectives, local archives, neighbourhood associations, libraries, community centres and local cultural agents. When this happens, the festival ceases to function only as an event and begins to operate as a more stable cultural infrastructure, capable of sustaining relationships, exchanges and learning beyond its punctual duration.

This territorial dimension is especially relevant because photography possesses a unique capacity to activate memories, local narratives, shared identities, conflicts of representation, and situated forms of observation. Designed from a place of proximity, this mediation allows the festival to move beyond simply presenting content and become a space that listens, engages in dialogue, investigates, and builds with others. In this sense, working with the territory does not simply mean expanding audiences or extending activities to new contexts, but rather examining how the festival becomes meaningful for specific communities, how it is influenced by them, and how it fosters deeper forms of belonging, relevance, and cultural connection. This does not mean renouncing artistic or international ambition, but rather reinforcing the cultural and social base that makes it sustainable. The point is not to reproduce standardised global models, but to start from the concrete reality of each place to project it strategically towards an international sphere that is connected, critical and collaborative. In many peripheral territories or those located outside the main centers of cultural legitimation, the relationship with the land has been a prerequisite for sustaining photographic practices and mediation mechanisms with significant social impact and deep roots. In contexts shaped by the hierarchies of the hegemonic North and Eurocentric frameworks of cultural validation, where mediation is already part of many established institutions, the challenge lies not so much in introducing it from scratch as in deepening its capacity for relevance, engagement, and reciprocal transformation, so that international legitimacy is not divorced from public responsibility or the connection with communities. Territorial mediation, therefore, requires time, continuity and a less extractive institutional attitude: it is not only about taking activities into a community, but about building relationships in which the community also transforms the festival. In this horizon, the community should not be understood only as the event's audience, but as one of its most valuable and lasting constructions.

→ **A festival rooted in its territory and open to being transformed by its community builds a form of cultural mediation that is deeper, more coherent and more sustainable.**

Examples and practical recommendations:

1. Establish partnerships with schools, libraries, community centres, neighbourhood collectives and nearby cultural agents.
2. Design mediation activities that begin from stories, memories, archives or issues of the territory.
3. Incorporate local narratives into the programme and work with community archives or neighbourhood memories whenever relevant.
4. Include walks, drifts or photographic actions in urban or rural space.
5. Develop activities outside traditional exhibition spaces.
6. Think of the community as an interlocutor and co-constructor of the festival, and not only as a recipient.
7. Sustain territorial lines of work beyond the festival dates and avoid punctual relationships lacking continuity with local agents.

7. Digital and Hybrid Formats to Broaden Access and Continuity

Digital formats do not replace the in-person festival experience, but they can significantly broaden its possibilities for mediation, activation and continuity. Used strategically, they allow conversations to be extended, processes to be documented, access for distant audiences to be facilitated, archives to be reinforced, lines of work to be sustained throughout the year, and resources to be offered that accompany the experience beyond the days of the event.

The aim is not to digitise everything, but to identify which formats can coherently complement the in-person proposal. Recorded conversations, mediation capsules, downloadable materials, commented tours, online meetings, audiovisual archives, reading groups, photobook clubs or follow-up platforms can constitute valuable extensions as long as they are well articulated and do not merely respond to a logic of accumulating content. At the same time, it is important to remember that connectivity and technological access remain unequal, so a responsible hybrid strategy must avoid depending on complex infrastructures or presuming that all audiences relate to digital environments in the same way. The digital should broaden possibilities, not produce new exclusions. Used judiciously, these formats also allow the festival to function as a platform of memory, archive and relational continuity over time.

This digital and archival dimension also requires clear attention to copyright, image rights and legal agreements. When festivals record, publish, stream, archive or circulate talks, workshops, exhibitions, portfolios or artistic works online, they should establish transparent agreements with artists, speakers, educators, photographers and participants regarding permissions, credits, reproduction rights, duration of use, platforms of circulation and possible future uses of the material. A responsible digital strategy is not only technical or communicational, but also ethical and legal: it must

protect authorship, clarify consent and avoid assuming that in-person participation automatically authorises online dissemination or long-term archival use.

→ **Digital and hybrid formats broaden the reach of the festival when they complement in-person events with meaning, accessibility, continuity, and respect for authorship, image rights, and consent.**

Examples and practical recommendations:

1. Record, archive and make talks, debates, meetings and other relevant festival contents accessible.
2. Create brief resources and downloadable materials for consultation before or after the visit.
3. Design simple digital tours for remote audiences.
4. Organise online activities throughout the year to maintain links with communities.
5. Combine in-person meetings with virtual follow-up sessions.
6. Use digital tools that are easy to use and low-cost.
7. Always evaluate the access, usefulness, sustainability, legal implications, and usage rights of each digital format, avoiding technological complexities or forms of dissemination that do not provide real value or that do not have clear consent.

8. Training, Care and Recognition of Mediation Teams

The quality of cultural mediation depends to a great extent on the people who make it possible and on the festival's capacity to recognise this work as a structural dimension of its care, its relationships and its institutional responsibility. However, in many festivals, this labour remains precarious, little recognised or treated as a secondary function. For this reason, a practical guide for the sector must clearly state that mediation teams require preparation time, specific training, fair working conditions and institutional recognition.

Mediating does not consist merely in transmitting information about an exhibition. It involves capacities for listening, adaptation, pedagogical sensitivity, contextual reading, group management, clear communication and critical thought, as well as solid knowledge of the festival's contents, its curatorial objectives and the working dynamics with other areas. When this task is improvised or delegated without accompaniment, the festival's audience experience is weakened. Likewise, caring for teams means recognising the emotional, affective and relational intensity that often accompanies mediation, especially in contexts of high audience diversity or when addressing sensitive, conflictive or memory-laden issues. The quality of the relationship with audiences also depends on the quality of internal working conditions. If festivals wish to strengthen their mediating and relational dimension, they must invest not only in programmes and activities, but also in those who sustain them.

→ **There is no solid cultural mediation without teams that are trained, cared for, recognised and fully integrated into the festival's structure.**

Examples and practical recommendations:

1. Select mediators based on pedagogical and relational criteria, in addition to technical knowledge.
2. Offer specific prior training on the exhibitions, the audiences and the festival's working frameworks.
3. Facilitate meetings between mediation, curating, production and communication.
4. Provide clear but flexible working guidelines.
5. Recognise mediation work economically and professionally.
6. Include preparation, rest, exchange and evaluation time in the overall planning.
7. Support teams in complex or emotionally demanding situations and avoid improvisation or overload.
8. Understand mediation as a relevant specialisation within the cultural sector.

9. Documentation, Evaluation and Institutional Learning

Education and cultural mediation require ongoing evaluation, not in order to be reduced to simple indicators, but to understand which processes generate meaningful participation, which audiences are activated, which obstacles persist and which institutional learnings can be consolidated over time. By virtue of their periodic character, festivals have a privileged opportunity to review strategies between editions, introduce adjustments and build cumulative improvement.

Evaluating does not consist merely in counting attendees or measuring immediate levels of satisfaction. It also entails observing how audiences participate, which formats encourage deeper engagement, which territorial alliances are strengthened, which materials work effectively, and which dimensions of the festival remain less accessible. The documentation of these experiences can also become a valuable resource both for the network of festivals and for the consolidation of the sector. Evaluation must integrate both quantitative and qualitative dimensions: figures are necessary, but insufficient to grasp the depth of a mediation experience. Mediators' accounts, participants' comments, field observations, teacher feedback, and process reports all provide equally relevant information. This can be further enhanced by creating continuous evaluation tools integrated into the exhibition space itself and the festival's activities, such as comment boards, sticky notes in the gallery, open-ended questions at the end of the tour, brief feedback stations, forms accessible via QR codes, or simple digital tools that allow for the collection of audience impressions, interpretations, questions, and experiences in real time. When well-designed, these resources not only facilitate data collection but also transform evaluation into a dynamic practice of listening and feedback. In the long term, this practice strengthens the festival's capacity to make more informed decisions, adjust its modes of relation, revise its frameworks of mediation and build an institutional identity that is more reflective, more hospitable and more coherent with its communities.

→ **Cultural mediation improves when it is documented, evaluated honestly and turned into a source of ongoing institutional learning.**

Examples and practical recommendations:

1. Design simple evaluation tools for mediation activities.
2. Collect qualitative information in addition to numerical data.
3. Listen to participants, teachers, mediators and collaborating communities.
4. Record methodologies, materials, findings and access barriers detected in each edition.
5. Identify which formats generate more meaningful participation and which audiences remain absent.
6. Share internal conclusions with the full team.
7. Turn evaluation into a tool for improvement and not only for justification.
8. Archive learnings to build continuity between editions.

10. Networking and the Collective Construction of Knowledge

Education and cultural mediation in photography festivals are strengthened decisively when they are conceived from collaboration rather than institutional isolation. Many festivals face similar challenges: how to work with schools, train mediators, design materials, sustain lines of work throughout the year, articulate artistic rigour with inclusion, document learning, or activate diverse territories. In this context, sharing experiences not only avoids duplication and accelerates improvement processes but also broadens the sector's capacity to produce more consistent and sustainable responses.

Networks make it possible to exchange methodologies, tools, partnerships, mediation materials, evaluation frameworks and accessibility strategies, while also making visible experiences developed outside major cultural centres, including rural, peripheral, itinerant or community initiatives that have built valuable knowledge with limited resources. For an international network such as IPFA, this exchange is especially relevant, since territorial diversity can become an effective source of innovation and learning. In the long term, sharing knowledge not only improves each festival's practices but also helps to legitimise mediation as a central dimension of the sector. Professionalisation is built not only through internal structures, but also through common languages, mutual learning and sustained cooperation. In this sense, collaboration constitutes a structural response to an interdependent cultural ecosystem, in which the sustainability of each festival is linked, in part, to the strength of the whole. Conceived in this way, mediation ceases to be a private task of each institution and affirms itself as a field of collective construction, capable of replacing competitive logic with more supportive forms of relation, exchange and mutual support.

→ **Shared knowledge, interdependence and sustained collaboration strengthen the sector's capacity to transform its festivals and build more solid common horizons.**

Examples and practical recommendations:

1. Share guides, materials and mediation methodologies between festivals.
2. Exchange experiences on work with schools, communities and diverse audiences.

3. Create spaces for debate within the network on education, mediation and participation.
4. Promote meetings between teams from different festivals and develop shared resources for the training of mediators.
5. Make visible practices developed outside major cultural centres.
6. Circulate learning on accessibility, evaluation and participation.
7. Encourage collaborative projects between festivals and educational agents.
8. Document and disseminate inspiring cases within the IPFA network as a way of strengthening the ecosystem as a whole.