

Fáilte Ireland Festivals and Events Best Practice Guide



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Introduction to the Best Practice Guide

Welcome to Fáilte Ireland's Festivals & Events Best Practice Guide, designed to assist organisers of new and existing festivals & events. The CD-ROM provides the user with both a tool for greater understanding of events management and a framework for planning, producing and marketing your festival or event.

In this new edition, all areas have been strengthened and we have introduced a number of useful templates to support you in organising your festival or event. In addition, we have brought the reference lists up to date as far as possible. We hope that these changes will ensure that the CD remains effective as a practical guide.

Furthermore, we have introduced a best practice checklist relative to the four principal modules. We recommend that you first undertake this checklist as it will provide you with an excellent 'jumping-off' point to understand what areas you need to consider.

Finally, you can download a printer-friendly version of the Festivals & Events Best Practice Guide from the CD in Microsoft Word and Adobe PDF format; this means that you can easily distribute the information to your staff or committee.

Festival and Event Management

Introduction

Festival and event management is about the reason why your festival or event exists. It is also about the future vision that your Team/Committee has for your festival/event. Above all it is about having a Strategic Business Plan, called the Plan in this guide, agreed by your Team/Committee, and set out in writing. This Plan will help to guide your work as the Team/Committee strives to achieve the objectives of the Plan detailed in the document. Of course the Plan cannot and must not be a static document. By definition the festival/event Plan is a dynamic one which changes with experience and as new opportunities arise from time to time.

The Plan can be looked on as a document with a series of steps that helps your Team/Committee to move the festival/event from your current point to a desired point of development 2/3 years hence. It compares to a series of signposts to help you get to your destination. On Irish roads, signposts are not essential in order to get from towns A to B if you know the general area. However, when such signs exist it makes the journey easier and more efficient, as well as helping to anticipate any road diversions which may occur along the way.

A final point – you may say that your festival/event is just a small annual summer experience for your community, and that you do not need such a Plan. To adopt that viewpoint is to under-sell the importance of your festival or event and in so doing, you may well miss out on the opportunity for your festival/event to grow into an enhanced experience for your community and visitors alike.

Remember also that, if you are applying for grant support (whether from Fáilte Ireland, an Arts Council, Local Authority, other grant support agencies or potential sponsors), grant administrators will be anxious to review your Plan, as evidence that you are adopting a professional approach to the management of your festival or event.

The core element of good Festival and Event management is a properly prepared and implemented Business Plan.

Legal Issues

Does your Team/Committee 'own' the festival or event, or do you know who carries the legal responsibility?

This is a critical question for your Team/Committee. Wherever numbers of people are brought together for entertainment purposes legal issues can arise.

If your Team/Committee are the organisers and 'owners' of the festival or event then they should operate under the umbrella of a legal entity; many organisers appear to operate as an informal Team/Committee with no legal protection. In the event of a problem your Team/Committee could find themselves to be 'jointly and severally liable', in the event of a claim against the Team/Committee.

It is essential to get legal advice on this immediately, if you have not done so before now. In a survey carried out in Ireland of festivals and events organisers in 2004, it was found that 74% of festivals and events were organized by a voluntary Team/Committee.

It is also possible that your Team/Committee may have agreed to organise and run the festival or event on behalf of others. Likewise your Team/Committee must make sure that they are fully indemnified by those for whom they are running the festival or event.

The key issue is 'does your Team/Committee carry financial responsibility for any successful claim that might be taken against the festival or the event'?

Contracts

Do you enter into contracts with suppliers for the festival or event?

If you do then it is most important that the contracts are examined carefully to see what if any additional responsibilities, legal or otherwise are binding by signing any individual contract. For example a contract might state that it is the responsibility of the festival or event organisers to have handling equipment on site at the time of delivery of the seating, otherwise the suppliers will not be responsible for any delays that may arise.

Contracts should only be signed at full Team/Committee Meetings and the details carefully recorded in the minutes and filed in the Minute Book.

The Team/Committee

Does your Team/Committee have a Constitution or written set of operational rules?

Every Team/Committee should have a written Constitution that has been adopted at an Annual General Meeting (AGM). Basically the Constitution is a set of rules that governs the operation and management of a Committee. Your Solicitor will be of help in preparing this document.

Have you clearly thought out the approach to the Organisation structure and how it operates?

This should be put together as a short section of a Business Plan, and will cover the following areas:

- a. Team/Committee – how many members?
- b. How long do Officers/ordinary Members serve before they must retire?
- c. Sub-Team/Committee roles
- d. Guiding policies of the festival/event
- e. Procedures for Team/Committee meetings.

Do you have a clearly defined Organisation structure?

The basic recommended positions are as follows:

- a. Chairman – serves two years and becomes ordinary Team/Committee member for a further two years
- b. Vice-Chairman – serves two years and then becomes Chairman

- c. Secretary – serves for three years
- d. Treasurer – takes responsibility for all financial matters, generally serves two years or more. Some Team/Committees have two treasurers who split the responsibilities between them.
- e. Public Relations – serves for a two year period
- f. Marketing – serves minimum of two years
- g. Safety Officer – serves for a minimum of two years
- h. Up to six Ordinary Team/Committee members.

This will give a Team/Committee of thirteen people. Do remember that large Team/Committees do not necessarily achieve a greater volume of work.

For some festivals and events a Team/Committee role of Logistics Coordinator may prove very useful. This is especially so if a lot of equipment has to be delivered to the site and erected and removed after the festival or event.

It is vitally important that the Chairman, with the best will in the world, does not attempt to impose his/her views too strongly on the Team/Committee. In other words the Team/Committee may come up with ideas that the Chairman may not like, but he/she will usually have to accept their views for the good of the festival or event.

Are you setting up a new festival/event Team/Committee?

Look at other Team/Committees in your town or community, and see who the really strong performers on those teams are, i.e. those who actually do what they promise to do? Can you get a few of them to join your Team/Committee?

Try and seek out these essential skills:

- a. Finance
- b. Marketing
- c. Public relations
- d. Knowledge of local retail trade

- e. Experience of organisational techniques
- f. Committed – ‘workers not talkers’
- g. Management.

Do you keep Minutes of each Meeting?

Typed Minutes must be kept of all meetings, and circulated with the Agenda of the upcoming meeting. These should be kept in a formal Minute Book. It is essential that all Minutes are formally adopted by the process of being Proposed and Seconded. Key issues arising at Meetings should also be formally adopted or defeated.

Meetings should be of a defined length; longer meetings are not necessarily more successful than shorter ones.

Do you have a set number of meetings each year?

You should agree on the number of meetings that will be held annually. Quite often meeting attendance will be much better if all meetings are held in the same day, venue and time – for example on the first Tuesday of every month at 8.00 pm in the Community Centre. Meeting dates can therefore be agreed at the beginning of the year for the full year.

Have you agreed on what is meant by a majority vote?

Your Team/Committee should agree on what constitutes a majority vote at meetings.

Does your Chairman have a casting vote?

Does the Chairman have a casting vote, or an additional vote to break a tied vote? Sometimes this can be most important, but it can also divide a Team/Committee going forward.

Does the Team/Committee have the power to co-opt new members?

Does your Team/Committee have the power to co-opt new Team/Committee members between Annual General Meetings (AGM),

and if so what is the maximum number of co-options allowed? This should really be limited to about one or two per year. There should be most compelling reasons for the Team/Committee to agree on a co-option. For example a very large potential sponsor wants a seat on the Team/Committee as part of the sponsorship deal.

Large Team/Committees will not be necessarily more successful than smaller Team/Committees, and they are more difficult for the Chairman to handle.

Do you have an Annual General Meeting (AGM)?

The Annual General Meeting should be open to the public and must be run with skill by the Chairman. Invite the local media to attend. You should circulate the notice of the AGM widely in your area. The Annual General Meeting is the one occasion during the year when the Chairman, Team/Committee and sub-Team/Committees must answer to the public for their stewardship during the year.

Do you have provisions for Extraordinary General Meetings?

You should agree under what circumstances the Chairman is obliged to call an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). This should be documented in your constitution, operational rules or business plan.

Sub Team/Committees

Have you agreed on a Sub-committee structure and responsibilities?

For all but the smallest festivals/event Sub-committees are recommended. The degree of authority delegated by the Chairman to the Chairs of Sub-committees must be clearly agreed, and recorded in the minutes. However at all times the roles of Sub-committees is subservient to the main Team/Committee.

Possible Sub-committees include:

- a. Finance
- b. Marketing
- c. Production

- d. Programme
- e. Public Relations.

Not all Team/Committees will need five sub-committees, except for larger festivals or events.

In each case it is important that the Chairman of the main Team/Committee delegates responsibility to the Sub-committee Chairman in regard to expenditure by that Sub-committee. Some Team/Committees may agree that for example any sub-committee expenditure over €1,000 has to be sanctioned by the main Team/Committee.

The role of the Sub-committee is to take total responsibility for all aspects of the festival/event coming within their area of activity. The Chairman of each sub-committee reports in detail at each committee meeting.

The Business Plan

Does the festival/event have a Business Plan?

This is essential – the Business Plan acts as a ‘signpost’ to move your festival or event from its current stage to the desired development for the future. Important sponsors will always seek a copy of the Business Plan. Keep it simple and understandable to all. The preparation of the Business Plan is the role of the total Team/Committee, guided by the Chairman.

There are many variations on a possible Business Plan format. Basically the Business Plan should give a summary of Team/Committee and the festival or event, an analysis of the present business that the festival or event attracts, and a financial and promotional strategy for the future.

The following is a suggested structure for the Business Plan:

- 1) Legal status of the Team/Committee
- 2) History of the event
- 3) Vision
- 4) Mission Statement
- 5) Goals
- 6) Objectives & Strategies
- 7) Market Analysis

- 8) SWOT / Situation Analysis
- 9) Programme of Events
- 10) Team/Committee Structure
- 11) Organising Committee
- 12) Operational/Tactical Plans
- 13) Control Systems
- 14) Event Evaluation and Feedback.

The Business Plan Template and Business Plan Definitions are available to download from the CD-ROM.

If you have a Business Plan was it revised within the last twelve months?

By definition the Business Plan is dynamic and will have to change over time. Ideally it should be revised or updated every twelve months.

The Vision Statement

Do you have a vision statement for the festival/event?

A vision statement usually describes what the event seeks to become and to achieve in the long term. It is brief, precise and motivational in nature.

For example - "This will be the largest international Folk Music Festival in Britain and Ireland by 2012, and it will attract visitors from France, Germany and Holland."

The Mission Statement

Have you considered why you run the festival/event?

The Mission Statement should indicate what the festival or event is trying to achieve and to whom it is targeted.

The following questions should be answered in the Mission Statement which should be about two sentences long:

- a. Who are our visitors?

- b. What are their entertainment needs?
- c. What are the core activities of our Team/Committee, and why are these activities important?
- d. How can we use the festival/event to promote our area?

Objectives

Have you set clear objectives?

If you do not have a set of agreed objectives, then you do not know why you are running the festival or event. Just a few words are all that is required for each objective. At the end of the festival/event the outcome should be reviewed against the objectives.

The objectives should be SMART, that is:

- a. Specific - objectives must be stated clearly and in a few words
- b. Measurable – it must be possible to measure the success of each objective
- c. Achievable - there must be a realistic hope that the Team/Committee can achieve these objectives
- d. Realistic - they must be realistic
- e. Time Specific – by a certain year/date this will have been achieved.

Some examples of objectives are as follows:

- a. To attract a minimum of 12,500 visitors mainly from the county
- b. To generate a gross income based on ticket sales and beverage and food of not less than €75,000
- c. To make a net profit of not less than €10,000

- d. That at least 4,000 of these visitors will be repeat visitors, having attended the festival at least once in the previous three years.

Festival/Event Strategy

Do you have a clearly defined festival/event strategy?

Having carried out an examination of your festival/event through your statements of vision and mission, you are then in a position to decide on a strategy for the future.

There are many strategies that you could consider, but the following are some examples measured in attendance terms. Strategies could be based on financial outcome – i.e. raise a minimum of €5,000 for local development, or increase the number of trade stands each year by 10%. Above all you must be sure that your chosen strategy is acceptable to the local community and visitors to the festival or event alike.

- a. Maintain the festival/event as it is – do not try to grow numbers as this will cause difficulties locally
- b. Try and grow numbers by about 5% per annum up to 2007
- c. Reduce numbers to the 2004 levels because of problems with car parking or loss of a main sponsor last year
- d. Generate a profit of €5,000 to liquidate the 2004 debt
- e. Generate a profit of €5,000 for a local charity

Market Analysis

Do you have a profile of the existing visitors to the festival or event?

It is very important that you have some information on the types of visitors that are attending your festival or event. Successful marketing flows from a complete understanding of your visitors – who they are, where they live and the leisure needs they seek to satisfy. The post event evaluation techniques suggested later in this Guide will provide you with solutions on how to undertake market research.

The following is some of the data that you should try and get about your visitors:

- a. Age
- b. Group size
- c. Group make-up – families, couples, visitors on their own
- d. Where do they come from ?
- e. How often have they visited the festival or event?
- f. How much do they spent at the festival or event?

Situational Analysis

Have your Team/Committee recently carried out a situational analysis of the festival or event?

This involves looking at your festival or event in an honest and critical manner. The usual way to do this is to carry out a SWOT analysis. This involves looking at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as they relate to your festival or event.

This analysis might reveal the following issues:

- a. Strengths – Well established and respected festival running for the past twelve years.
- b. Weaknesses – Existing Team/Committee has been in place with little change for past seven years, and no new ideas are being examined by the Team/Committee.
- c. Opportunities – Potential new sponsor willing to contribute €6,500 next year will allow the expansion of the festival by one day.
- d. Threats – Suggested rival festival to take place just before our festival in same month in next year.

Obviously under each of the four headings there could be a number of points. This analysis is worthless unless it is carried out in a very open and honest manner.

Strengths and weaknesses usually apply to the internal management or production of the festival or event.

Opportunities and threats refer to external issues not normally within your direct control.

Festival/Event Programme

Have you agreed on the core theme or themes of the festival/event?

The Team/Committee must agree on what is/are the core element(s) of the festival or event. Too many inappropriate fringe events can compromise the overall theme or core of the festival or event.

It is the core elements that usually form the main attractions for visitors to the festival or event.

For example:

- a. Traditional music
- b. Jazz
- c. Drama
- d. Veteran/vintage cars
- e. Walking.

Agreement on the real core themes is important from a marketing point of view. It also helps to keep a clear Team/Committee focus on the audience/market for the festival/event.

Does your festival/event have fringe events?

Carefully chosen fringe events can add to the success of the festival/event, but must be clearly related to the core theme(s). A Drama Festival might as a fringe activity have a workshop on stage or lighting design. However care must be taken that fringe events do not take over from the real purpose of the festival or event.

Post Festival/Event Evaluation

Did you survey attendees at your Festival or Event within the past two years?

Surveys can provide vital information that can be used to improve your festival or event in future years, provided that they are carried out properly. These surveys should be carried out every three years. The survey instrument must be carefully constructed in order to exclude bias. A range of techniques are used in post event evaluation including:

- a. Self completion questionnaires
- b. One to one interview on exit from festival or event
- c. Focus groups in which groups of 10/12 people are interviewed.

The following are some areas that should be investigated in your survey:

- a. Where did the respondent come from?
- b. How far did they travel to attend the festival or event?
- c. Did they stay locally to attend the festival or event?
- d. How did they hear of the festival or event?
- e. How many in their group?
- f. How much did they spend at the festival or event?

You also need to get the views of visitors on:

- g. Car parking
- h. Site signage
- i. The official opening
- j. Festival/event printed programme
- k. Food and beverage outlets
- l. Festival/event individual entertainments
- m. Quality of the festival or event
- n. Value for money
- o. Returning to a future festival/event
- p. Helpers and volunteers with whom they came into contact.

Post event evaluation measures the outcomes of the event in relation to its objectives and is an important tool enabling more informed decisions to be made and more efficient planning to be done and improves event outcomes. Most potential sponsors and some grant giving agencies will seek post event evaluation to be undertaken.

Do you have a formal post festival/event debrief?

If not then you should do this within one week of the end of the festival or event while everything is still fresh in people's minds.

A debrief should be conducted with all stakeholders. This may be done at a single 'debriefing' meeting or a series of meetings depending on the complexity of the festival or event. It is often useful for an agenda to be circulated before the meeting.

You should discuss every aspect of the festival or event in detail with a view to introducing further improvements for the following year. Some of the content of this Best Practice Guide can be used as discussion headings.

The minutes of the meeting should be documented so that they may be referred to in advance next year's festival/event.

Do remember that it is more important to discuss in detail what went wrong, rather than what went well.

Festival and Event Finance

Introduction

Financial planning is the cornerstone of your Team/Committee activities. Without it you can make little progress towards the running of a successful festival or event. Good financial management will mean that your Team/Committee should not receive unwelcome surprises at the end of your financial year when the year's accounts have been prepared.

It is good practice to review the budget at each monthly meeting, where income and expenditure will be examined in detail. This review can best be facilitated by the Chairman of the Finance Sub-Team/Committee or the Treasurer circulating a budget report to all present at the meeting. This document should form part of the Minutes and be included in the Minute Book.

Planned expenditure for the coming month should also be agreed.

A Team/Committee should ideally have monthly income targets against which they can measure their monthly fund raising progress.

Budgets

Do you have a detailed annual Budget?

Every Festival/Event must have a detailed annual budget.

Remember budgets must be realistic and the figures used in budgets must have a properly worked out basis for their existence. The experience of the previous year will be a help in deciding individual budget item levels for the current year. Ultimately there must be some real logic for budget decisions. The budget for each new year should be prepared by November of the previous year.

The Festival & Event Budget Template is available to download from the CD-ROM. We have included recommended headings. These can be changed to suit your own festival or event.

When your Team/Committee is allocating figures to each budget heading it is essential that the financial allocations are realistic, and not just an automatic addition of a % on to the income/expenditure for the previous year.

Some festival and event Team/Committees use sub-budgets or functional budgets as illustrated in the following example of a Marketing functional budget.

Remember that in practice people usually under-estimate their expenditure, and over-estimate the potential income, thus giving the likelihood of an end of year deficit.

The general guideline is to estimate revenue at 55% of the maximum and over estimate expenses by approximately 10%. Income should exceed expenses by a 1 – 2 % margin.

Marketing Expenditure:	€	Marketing Income:	€
Advertising –		Main Sponsor wishes all of their sponsorship to be allocated to marketing	
• Radio			
• TV			
• Newspapers			
• Internet			
• Magazines			
Graphic design			
Print production			
Distribution of print			
Website maintenance			
Mailing			
Development of mailing list			
Travel trade Workshops			
Media hospitality			
Official opening			
Public Relations			
Photographers Fees			
Total €		Total €	

Do you have a festival/event budget policy?

By this we mean that the event must have a policy formally agreed by the Team/Committee that this year's festival or event must meet certain financial criteria. For example:

- a. Break even – dangerous because this is too close to a loss
- b. Make a minimum profit of €5,500 to be given to a local charity or development project
- c. Accept a loss of up to €3,500 as the festival/event has a very important community dimension.

Do you have budget control measures in place?

Budgets must be controlled on a weekly basis; in that way problems may be anticipated before they become a serious financial problem for the event. In respect of control measures the following points are critical:

- a. Realistic figures must be allocated to each budget heading when the budget is being drawn up. There must be a logical basis to all budget figures, both expenditure and income.
- b. The budget policy must be reflected in the projected Income and Expenditure account. Remember that a break-even policy is not usually satisfactory – it is too close to a loss.
- c. If the budget is running over by 10%, then the cutting of all budget headings by a similar amount, to bring the budget into line, is not usually realistic.
- d. A critical aspect of budget control is the implications of the action(s) taken to bring the budget into line. For example, a festival or event that usually distributes the Programme free of charge may decide to make a charge of €2.50 per copy. With an attendance of say 7,500 people this may realise in gross terms perhaps €7,500 assuming that 40% of the attendance purchase a programme. However charging for programmes may change the public perception of the value, or importance of the festival or event. Another example might be to start charging for car parking at €3.00 per car, regardless of the number of occupants. The €3.00 will not make a great difference to most people but their perception of the festival or event may immediately change for the worse.
- e. Therefore you should use a 'what if... 'approach when trying to work out budget savings – this is called sensitivity analysis.

Do you consider variable costs and fixed costs separately?

Your Team/Committee must handle two different types of costs:

- a. Variable costs that will change with the level of festival attendance, the length of the festival etc.

- b. Fixed costs such as insurance and marketing that probably remain the same regardless of the number of people that attend.

Do you have formal financial reporting mechanisms for use at Team/Committee meetings?

At meetings the Treasurer or Chairman of the Finance sub-committee must report in clear terms the present situation in regard to income and expenditure. The Minutes of the meeting must reflect this report, and any actions agreed by the Team/Committee resulting from the financial report. It should be noted that most grant giving agencies will require details of the financial reporting procedures used by the organisation.

Financial Control

Do you have adequate controls in place in relation to receipts and payments?

Transaction records (either manual or electronic) should be maintained in order to record the details of all receipts and payments, and these should be updated as frequently as possible. For salaries and wages, guidelines are available for payroll/PAYE records. Supporting vouchers (such as invoices, expense claims, employment/tax records, cash reconciliations – see below) should be filed in orderly fashion, e.g. by transaction date.

Where there is cash income, such as admissions or car parking fees, the use of turnstiles or pre-numbered tickets can provide a check to ensure that all such receipts are lodged to the bank account (e.g. ticket serial numbers can be reconciled with the amount of cash collected). During the course of the festival/event, accumulated cash should be placed in a safe place and lodged to the bank at the earliest opportunity. Designate a person, other than those involved in taking in cash from customers, to reconcile the physical cash with the serial number records before bank lodgement.

All expenditure should be evidenced by suitable documentation (such as invoices) and paid by cheque or by bank transfer. For such payments, a minimum of two signatures should be required (it can be that three or more members of the Committee may be designated as authorised signatories under the rules, of which any two may sign).

Accounts of receipts and payments, as well as a list of expenditure incurred but not yet paid, and cash received but not yet lodged, and bank account statements, should be presented to the Team/Committee or its Finance Sub-Committee on a monthly basis.

Further advice and guidance on good financial control should be sought from a qualified accountant.

The Importance of Quotations from Suppliers

Do you always get more than one quotation for services?

There may be a temptation to use the same suppliers every year regardless of cost. Best practice suggests that you get three quotations for all services that you need to buy in. You might have a rule that you will do this for every item likely to cost more than €1,000.

You should consider adopting a policy that in regard to all purchases the lowest quotation will usually be accepted. A situation where the event pays more than necessary for a service, just to keep a local supporter happy, should not be tolerated.

Ticket Policy

Do you have a policy on how to decide what to charge for admission/tickets?

There are a number of generally accepted methods to determine the cost of admission as follows:

- a. Admission/ticket costs may be related to the financial budget policy of the organisation. Take the cost of running the event and add to it the required level of profit. This gross figure is then divided by the number of people that are expected to purchase tickets.
- b. Find out the admission/ticket price for a similar festival/event in your region and use that figure. This figure will be totally unrelated to the true financial needs of your event budget.
- c. Charge a premium for tickets because the 'act' is so well known and people are always anxious to attend their performance. However some people may have seen the act

recently elsewhere, and may not be prepared to pay a premium to see it again.

- d. Beware of the dangers of under pricing or over pricing. If the price is very low it can undervalue the event in the mind of your potential visitors. Over pricing may create unrealistic expectations for the visitor.

Festival/Event Grant Schemes

Are you aware of existing Grant Schemes?

There are a number of potential Grant Schemes available to assist qualifying festivals and events. The following are some web-sites that may be of help to your Team/Committee:

- a. Northern Ireland Arts Council - www.artscouncil-ni.org
- b. Arts Council for the Republic of Ireland - www.artscouncil.ie
- c. Fáilte Ireland - www.failteireland.ie
- d. Fáilte Ireland Festivals/Events Guidelines Document at www.failteireland.ie/festivals
- e. Northern Ireland Events – www.nievents.co.uk
- f. City and County Enterprise Boards www.enterpriseboards.ie
- g. Area Development Management Ltd. – www.adm.ie
- h. Most Local Authorities have an Arts Support Programme in place and you should look at the appropriate web-site.
- i. In the Republic of Ireland the Regional Offices of Fáilte Ireland should also be able to advise you on grant schemes.
- j. CREATE – 01 473 6600 Irish Fundraising Handbook, 5th edition

A list of useful contacts is available on the CD-ROM.

Key points in regard to grant schemes and applications:

- a. Read the Guidelines very carefully – exactly what sort of application can the scheme consider for funding
- b. Complete all sections of the Application Form fully
- c. Provide all necessary supporting documentation with your Application Form
- d. Beware of closing dates for grant applications. Some schemes may close many months in advance of the date of your festival
- e. Most grant schemes have limited funding, and early applications are more likely to be successful than those that are received when the fund is likely to be over-subscribed
- f. If your festival/event is awarded a grant read the conditions that may attach to that grant very carefully, and follow them exactly
- g. Invite a representative from the grant giving organisation to the official opening of your festival or event.

Sponsorship

Do you actively seek Sponsorship?

The first thing that your Team/Committee should remember about sponsorship is that, in general, sponsors now expect to receive some tangible benefits in return for their support. For sponsorships up to about €1,000 this may not be a critical factor for many sponsors. However, above that figure the picture changes.

Basically a sponsor must consider whether making a contribution of (say) €3,000 to your festival or event will give him/her a better return than spending the same amount of money on advertising. You must consider both your needs and theirs, and look both at the benefits which the sponsorship will bring to your festival or event, and the likely benefit that the sponsor will receive in return.

Does your Festival/Event have something to offer a potential sponsor?

Some festivals and events are much more suitable for sponsorship than others. This comes back to the point of what real benefits you can offer the potential sponsor. The following are some benefits that your festival or event may be able to offer a sponsor:

- a. Good locations for banners
- b. Wide circulation of the festival/event brochure in target market areas required by the potential sponsor
- c. Association with a widely acclaimed festival with a good national reputation
- a. A close match between the festival or event visitor profile and the target clients of the sponsor. For example, an Agricultural Show may be of interest to a major supplier of agricultural equipment.
- b. Your festival/event can provide excellent corporate entertainment opportunities
- c. TV and or radio coverage of the opening of the festival/event
- d. Networking opportunity for some of the staff in the sponsor company
- e. Product promotional opportunities.

Remember you must never promise a Sponsor a benefit unless you are sure that you can deliver on that benefit. Otherwise sponsor relationships will tend to be quite short!

Have you considered how a potential sponsor will assess your sponsorship request?

The following are some of the questions that a potential sponsor may have in mind when deciding whether to support your festival or event or not:

- a. What do I know about these people and their festival/event?
- b. Was their presentation well thought out and structured?
- c. Had they considered my likely exposure needs?
- d. Are they financially solvent?
- e. Does involvement represent a public relations risk to my Company?
- f. Has the festival/event had any negative publicity in recent years that might reflect on my Company?
- g. Has the festival or event got a high profile?
- h. Would I bring clients to the festival or event for hospitality purposes?
- i. Can they open up a new niche market for me?
- j. How much can I get out of 'them' in return for the lowest level of Sponsorship?
- k. How does their proposal rank in comparison to the eleven other proposals that I have on my desk?
- l. Would I be better to spend the €3,000 sought on radio or TV advertising – which would give me the best return?

Do you know how you should make the Sponsorship bid?

You have just one opportunity to get this right. First of all you need to do some research on the Company to consider what sort of sponsorship proposal might appeal to them. If possible read their last Annual Report if they have one, and try and talk to someone who has 'inside' knowledge of the Company. Try and find out if the Company has any special exposure needs. The Internet may be a good source of Company data.

If at all possible try and develop a 'champion' in the potential sponsor Company for your festival or event. This may not be the decision

maker, but hopefully he/she will champion the cause of the festival or event within the Company up to decision making level.

Find out the name and correct title of the person who handles all sponsorship requests. Make sure that you have the correct spelling of the name.

With that information and the suggestions detailed above, you can begin to write your sponsorship proposal.

The covering letter should be of no more than one page. The first paragraph should be such that it will catch the eye of the potential sponsor, who may have many other proposals on his/her desk. The content of the actual proposal document should contain the following:

- a. Very brief background to the festival or event
- b. Objectives of the festival or event, and how many years in existence.
- c. Number of visitors in previous years
- d. Profile of visitors
- e. Why your festival or event visitor profile fits the market profile for the potential sponsor
- f. What you are offering the sponsor in clear terms
- g. The funding that you are seeking, or benefit-in-kind that you have in mind
- h. A request for an early meeting to make a presentation.

If you are invited to make a presentation then it must be made by the best person for the task. This will not automatically be the Chairman, Secretary or the Public Relations person. The presenter must be able to make the right impact on the Company in quite a short period of time. This presentation should be no longer than 10 or 15 minutes at the most. A short well thought out presentation is much more effective than a long rambling one.

Remember that a presentation must be closely geared to the needs of that Company. Do not use exactly the same presentation each time that you are asked to make a sponsorship presentation to a Company.

Do you know what to do if sponsorship is offered?

Agree the ground rules in writing on both sides. These two letters of agreement should clearly identify the following:

- a. Precisely what the Company is expecting from your Team/Committee
- b. When will sponsorship cheque be handed over?
- c. Festival/event naming rights if appropriate
- d. Where will the Company Logo appear?
- e. Details of the locations of any Company banners/display stands etc
- f. The name and contact details for the sponsor 'minder'.

The sponsor 'minder' is the Team/Committee member who will be responsible for all contact with the sponsor in the lead-up to the festival or event. On the day of the official opening this person will be tasked with looking after the sponsor from the time that he/she arrives to their departure.

Benefit-in-Kind

Do you seek local Benefit-in-Kind?

Have you considered local benefit-in-kind instead of outright cash sponsorship? This route also requires careful research and planning. The following are some of the key questions that you need to ask:

- a. What does the festival/event need?
- b. Who has it?
- c. Who is well disposed to the festival/event?

- d. Do you have an appropriate contact in the business?
- e. What do they need in return? Sometimes nothing, sometimes too much.

Financial Accounts

Do you prepare year end financial accounts?

This is highly recommended. If your festival or event is applying for a grant then annual accounts from the previous year will usually be required as part of the application process. It is most important that a totally independent professional person looks at the festival/event accounts each year, and issues a formal auditor's statement or accounts certificate in regard to their findings.

Festival and Event Production

Introduction

This is an overview of some of the more serious issues regarding the production of festivals and events, including risk management, key aspects of insurance, health, safety and licensing requirements.

We have also sought to provide an overview of the operational activities that take place immediately prior to, and during, an event, noting that efficient preparation and due thought to operational issues will reduce the risk of something going wrong.

The Production Schedule

Do you have a Festival/Event Production Schedule?

If the answer to this very important question is 'no', then the Team/Committee should put such a schedule in place without delay. There are various reasons for this.

First of all, a properly thought out schedule will be of great use to the Team/Committee. It will help to get the various requirements for the festival/event in place, in the correct order, and at the right time.

It is a detailed listing of tasks with specific start and stop times occurring from set up of the events equipment (also known as load in/build) through to the eventual removal of all the equipment (load out/breakdown). It is often presented in the form of a Gantt chart illustrating time, activity, location and responsibility.

The advantages of using a Gantt chart are:

- It visually summarises the project or event schedule
- It is an effective communication and control tool (particularly with volunteers)
- It shows how different aspects of the festival or event production are dependent on each other
- It can point out problem areas or clashes of scheduling
- It provides a summary of the history of the event

For the Gantt chart to be an effective tool, the tasks must be arranged and estimated in the most practical and logical sequence.

The Production Schedule Template is available to download from the CD-ROM.

Milestone Dates

Do you set annual milestone dates?

These are important dates during the year by which time certain key actions must have been taken, or policies implemented. Failure of delivery by these dates may compromise the success of the festival/event in some way. The following are some examples:

- a. Sponsorship in place

- b. Fund raising
- c. Hall booked for Concerts
- d. Grant applications
- e. Marketing underway – individual milestones required here
- f. Groups/bands booked
- g. Brochures printed
- h. Entry forms circulated
- i. Personality booked to open the festival/event.

Contacts Database

Do you have a contacts database?

In both general terms and marketing terms this is very important. The database should contain the names and addresses for the following groups of people:

- a. Local contacts that are useful from an organisational point of view
- b. Potential sponsors
- c. Previous visitors to the festival or event
- d. Local services
- e. Media Contacts.

For all but 'c' the database should contain details of land line and mobile telephone numbers and email addresses. For previous visitors email addresses may be all that is available to you.

Volunteer Helpers

Do you have a strategy for recruiting volunteers?

In Ireland volunteers play a key role in the production of many festivals and events. In many instances volunteers constitute the great bulk of the workforce. The Team/Committee must look at the festival or event to identify the range of jobs and tasks that need to be done, and seek to match available volunteers to them. This matching is part of the selection process.

It is worthwhile to put together an application form for volunteers; the form should contain a 'talent and skills' section that will be significant in identifying what a volunteer can bring to your event. See the Volunteer Application Form Template in the resources section of this CD-ROM.

Volunteers must be carefully chosen; must receive appropriate training; be given direction on what they are to achieve, and how their efforts contribute to the festival or event as a whole; be given appropriate rewards, be appropriately motivated; and treated in accordance with appropriate legislation.

Do you know how to identify and liaise with potential sources of volunteers?

Volunteers are gathered from a wide variety of sources, some of which are listed below. Obviously the type of festival or event affects the type and the source of volunteers.

- a. Volunteers immediately associated with an event or event organisation or a friend, relative or acquaintance of someone involved in that society.
- b. Advertising in local media, most local radio stations will have a community notes broadcast where you could advertise your volunteer requirement for free.
- c. Advertise in libraries, job centres, volunteer organisations and community centres etc.
- d. Universities and third level courses in event management or tourism; students are often required to gain work experience with festivals and events as part of their course.
- e. Societies and clubs such as Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, local sports clubs or community organisations. The advantage of working with a group is that they may already have a team structure and good rapport within the group.
- f. Major Sponsors; as part of the sponsorship agreement, the sponsor may agree to provide the event with temporary workers with a wide range of skills including managerial, financial and marketing.
- g. Targeting recruitment; the event manager would determine the type of person most likely to do the job and track them down.

Do you have a volunteer briefing or training plan?

Because of the infrequent nature and short duration of events, training of event volunteers usually takes place on the job under the direction of the event manager or supervisor. In this case it is essential to provide a briefing session a few days in advance of the event at a time suitable to the volunteers.

The briefing will engender volunteers' enthusiasm for their role in an event and for its successful outcome. Volunteers should be given a job description so that they understand what is expected of them, this becomes the basis for a mutually rewarding experience.

Do you know what should be included in a volunteer briefing?

- a. Basic information about the event.
- b. Introduction to key staff members and other volunteers.
- c. Outline responsibilities for health and safety of visitors and participants and the reporting mechanism for urgent problems, how to get help and the sequence of call up of managers in an emergency.
- d. A tour of the layout of the site, highlighting emergency exits, assembly points, toilets, catering and other facilities, access for disabled visitors and for emergency vehicles or staff.
- e. Crowd management issues; the operation, opening and closing of exits; ensuring that emergency exits are open throughout the event.
- f. How to direct and help the public, audience or participants and the need for a calm and courteous approach to all involved.
- g. How to recognise and act on signs of crowd or individual distress; how to deal with overcrowding by dispersal or by opening of further exits or entrances to overflow space.
- h. What action to take in the event of an accumulation of rubbish or fire risk; action to take if a fire is found; how to raise the alarm; how to respond to a small fire or small emergency.
- i. The mechanism for communication between stewards and managers; the use of coded messages to identify types of emergencies and planned responses to them.
- j. They should be made aware that they will be given an opportunity to provide feedback post event.

It is also worthwhile to run through any additional problems or scenarios that they may encounter or that the event has encountered in the past and discuss solutions for these issues.

You should if possible have prepared some written briefing notes that the volunteers can take away. Details of the volunteer briefing should be recorded in writing.

The outcome of the induction process should be a group of volunteers who are committed to the event, enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their role in it and aware of what part their job plays in the totality of the event.

Do you have a strategy to manage volunteers at the festival or event?

- a. Ideally you should organise the volunteers into teams and assign a team leader to each. This will simplify reporting, problem solving and communications with the team on the day of the event.
- b. Ensure that the team leaders are properly briefed and that all volunteers are clear on their role.
- c. In some situations it may be appropriate to have a staff/committee member act as a Chief Steward to direct and work with volunteers on the day.
- d. Volunteers who are recruited as stewards or guides should be easy to identify by means of colourful or high-visibility jackets, vests or sashes. These may also carry easily identifiable numbers which should be clearly visible.
- e. Volunteers who are under 18 years of age should not be recruited as stewards or left in an isolated position.
- f. There should be no consumption of alcohol or other substances while volunteers are on duty, nor should any of them leave their allocated posts without permission or relief.
- g. The Chief Steward should have a rota in place so that no one spends too long a period doing the same repetitive job, and to

ensure that volunteers are adequately provided for in terms of refreshment.

- h. The Team/Committee must realise that very often the volunteers are the public face of the Festival or Event and must be supported by the organisation, empowered and treated with the respect.
- i. The Team/Committee should ensure that all volunteers know that they are appreciated, thank them for their efforts after the event, give them recognition in post event PR and invite them to the wrap party as a thank you. This will pay dividends in the retention of volunteers year after year.
- j. Finally, where possible volunteers and or team leaders should be invited to a de-brief as soon as possible after the event to evaluate and gain feedback from their experiences.

Organisers should also research Volunteering Ireland, www.volunteeringireland.ie or Volunteer Centres Ireland www.volunteer.ie for additional information.

Risk Assessment

Have you recently carried out a risk assessment to determine the potential risks to which members of the public, volunteers and staff may be exposed?

A Health & Safety statement is designed to safeguard you and your team and your visitors from incident and accident. It will also help prove to an external party that you took responsible steps to minimize the risk of accidents.

You should avoid the error of assuming that there are no risks attached to the holding of your festival or event because it has been running for many years without a problem.

The preparation of a risk management document is part of the work necessary in preparing the Health & Safety Statement. A Safety Officer should be appointed to complete the Risk Assessment and the Health and Safety Statement.

This can only be done by carrying out an honest and thorough assessment of the possible health and safety risks that may be involved in attendance at the festival or event. The Risk Assessment must be prepared as a written document.

One definition of risk assessment is '... a formal review and consideration of potential hazards, their impacts and the likelihood that together they could cause harm, affecting the health and safety or welfare of people affected by your event'.¹

It is suggested that you examine each potential risk under the following headings:

- a. The hazard
- b. The risks associated with that hazard
- c. Controls – how will you control those identified risks?
- d. Rating – how do you rate the potential risk – low, medium, high or very high?

Hazards can be grouped under the following headings, but you may wish to add to this list to meet the needs of your own festival or event.

- a. Spectators
- b. Fire
- c. Electrical
- d. Weather
- e. Noise
- f. Litter
- g. Waste

You need to examine the following aspects of the festival or event, and assess the risk involved to whom, when, and why, using the approach suggested above. These aspects include:

- a. The build up – 'The In' - cars, trucks, vans, motor-cycles, pedestrians
- b. Car parking - cars, trucks, vans, motor-cycles, pedestrians, especially children
- c. Crowd control – how are crowds to be controlled, barriers, fencing etc. This is especially important in the build up to

¹ Margaret Edgill MBS.

concerts or stage performances, during the event, and during the dispersal of the crowd afterwards.

- d. Staff and volunteers – consequences of incorrect instruction given by a volunteer or Team/Committee member
- e. Stage safety – are there two sets of access stairs?
- f. Fire extinguishers, fire blankets, water hoses – where are they available, are they available closest to the possible fire outbreak sources?
- g. The disabled and those in wheelchairs
- h. Essential organisers traffic movement on site during the festival or event
- i. Sale of alcoholic drink on site
- j. Food preparation on site by mobile caterers
- k. Crowd disturbances and their effect on other attendees
- l. Queues
- m. The break down – 'The Out'.

When looking at potential risk areas the 'what if' scenario is critically important. For example, you must ask the question in their risk assessment – *“what if a member of the public collapses in the middle of a crowd of 600 people; how do we get medical aid and an ambulance to that person within say 3 minutes? Will that ambulance get delayed by cars approaching the festival or event car park?”*

Each scenario should have a thought out response that can be implemented straight away during the festival or event. There is no time to have a committee meeting when an emergency arises, to decide what should be done next.

The emergency procedures must be known to all Team/Committee members, volunteers, and staff, Gardai/PSNI etc.

Health & Safety Statement

Do you have a Risk Management Document and a Health & Safety Statement?

The risk assessment exercise carried out above will form the basis for the Health & Safety Statement.

Many festival and event organisers do not feel that this is important, or feel that it 'does not apply to them'. But, in the event of a claim or a suggestion of a claim, the Insurers will probably ask to see a copy of the Health & Safety Statement.²

Event Organisers have a 'duty of care' to the people who are directly affected by or involved in the event; this means taking actions that would prevent any foreseeable risks of injury. This 'duty of care' extends to the event staff, volunteers, the performers, contractors, the audience or spectators and the public in the surrounding areas.

This 'duty of care' also extends to catering contractors, sub-contractors and suppliers. It is important that the Event Organisers seek evidence from the suppliers and purveyors of food and beverage and associated services that they are in full compliance with food safety regulations and can demonstrate that they operate to the prescribed standards of food safety management (e.g. operate an accredited HACCP system, using trained personnel, and operate a product traceability system).

A fundamental legal principle applied to events is that of taking all reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions that could cause injury.

Emergency Procedures

Do you have documented Emergency Procedures in place?

The document should detail exactly what the emergency procedures to be followed are, under a given set of circumstances. Ideally this document should be discussed with the emergency services (Police, Fire, Ambulance etc) well in advance of their festival or event and they should be given a copy. Remember that if the emergency services are on site or are called to the festival/event site, they may wish to take over the emergency procedures. The document must identify clearly the decision maker or makers, their contact details and the chain of

² Sometimes this document has a slightly different title to that used here.

command. Your emergency procedures document should cover the following scenarios:

- a. Evacuation Procedure
- b. Fire
- c. Bomb Threat
- d. Crowd Surge or Overcrowding
- e. Disorder within the grounds
- f. Communications or Public Address Systems Failure.

Above all, panic in the audience must be avoided. Clear public address messages should be given at the appropriate time. Failure to keep the public informed can lead to rumours and eventual unnecessary panic among those attending. You should have a series of coded public address messages in the event of their need to contact a decision maker.

In the event of an incident occurring and emergency procedures being activated, it is most important that a report is written up within a few hours of the incident giving all relevant details, including the contact details for any witnesses.

The Incident Report Form Template is available to download from the CD-ROM.

Note: in the event of a major emergency a more detailed report will be required.

Insurance

Is the Festival/Event Insurance cover adequate?

It is essential that you examine and update your insurance requirements on an annual basis. Do remember that if for example, the numbers attending your festival or event rise or if you increase the duration of the festival/event, your insurance company must be advised in advance. You should check if your Committee is covered against theft/loss suffered by stand holders at your festival or event. Members of AOIFE, Association of Irish Festivals and Events, can usually get a preferential rate for insurance cover.

Finally, remember that if you change the potential risk, then your insurance company must be advised in writing. Failure to do that could invalidate your Insurance Policy under certain circumstances.

It is always better to try and work with your Insurance Company than try and hide from them until you have a claim or potential claim.

Licences and Permissions

Do you have the necessary Licences and Permissions in place, and in writing?

These could involve the following:

- a. Planning Permission especially for larger festivals and events
- b. Food and drink sales
- c. Entertainment e.g. fairground rides etc.
- d. Outdoor/indoor event licence – in some cases up to 16 weeks notice may be required
- e. Performing Rights for music used over a public address system
- f. Road closure permits
- g. Car park facilities provided by land owners
- h. Waste disposal
- i. For use of photographs not owned by the Team/Committee
- j. Ordnance Survey Permit if using Maps in brochures or other publicity materials.

Environmental Policy

Do you have an Environmental Policy?

An environmental policy will help to ensure that your event does not have a significant negative impact on the environment. Typical issues covered by an environmental policy are:

Legislative compliance - Your commitment to comply with the Waste Management Act. This sets out legislative requirements for organisers of festivals / events in areas such as litter control, bin provision, poster distribution and clean-up.

Waste management - Your commitment to minimise and manage waste. This could include:

- a. Provision of clearly signed front-of-house recycling and composting bins along with regular bins;
- b. Provision of back-of-house recycling facilities, cardboard collection and liquid waste recovery for vendors and production; and
- c. The recruitment of a "green-team" of volunteers to help keep waste sorted.

Food and beverage packaging - Your commitment to the reduction of plastic generated by the event. This can be achieved through:

- a. The use of re-usable, biodegradable or recyclable food service-supplies (e.g. plates, glasses, knives, forks and napkins) specified in your contracts with food vendors and suppliers; and
- b. The sale of multi-use water bottles, supplying free drinking water and asking vendors not to sell water in plastic bottles.

Transport - Your commitment to a reduction in car usage by attendees getting to your event. You could consider:

- a. Putting on free transfer buses from nearby stations;
- b. Offering joint ticket and travel packages to ticketed events;
- c. Facilitating "car-sharing" services; and
- d. Offering "green-tags" for sale so that attendees can offset their carbon usage.

Communication - Your commitment to communicating your environmental objectives with all stakeholders. Having an event that is environmentally friendly helps attract both sponsors and attendees as well as improving the effectiveness of your recycling / composting strategy.

- a. Issue media releases and advertising about your waste minimisation goals;
- b. Promote your environmental objectives using your website, official programmes, relevant magazines, and word of mouth;
- c. Run a poster campaign on the shuttle service to the event;
- d. Make announcements reminding people to make use of the recycling and composting facilities; and
- e. Have the green team educate and assist attendees to increase effectiveness.

Briefing of Key Services & Agencies

Do you carry out briefing sessions for key services and agencies?

It is most important that you brief the following at an appropriate time in the lead up to the festival or event:

- a. Gardai/PSNI/Police
- b. Local Authority
- c. Fire Service
- d. Local HSE Hospital & Ambulance Service
- e. Air/Sea Rescue
- f. Environmental Officer
- g. Area Engineers
- h. Community/Local Resident Groups
- i. Local land owners.

Signage

Do you have directional signs to your festival or event site/venue?

Safely, quickly and efficiently getting large numbers of people on and off a site in a short time, with minimal interference for local residents, or to the free flow of local and passing traffic is dependent on the positioning and erection of appropriate signage. AA signs may be useful here.

The following are the conditions³ that apply to the provision of AA signs for festivals and events:

- a. A minimum of 20 signs may be printed for any one booking. However a maximum of 10 is only permitted in Dun Laoghaire and Rathdown County Council areas.
- b. In accordance with the County Councils it is not permitted to use dates, days, months, times, brand names or logos on signs
- c. In certain circumstances it may be requested that you obtain permission from the County Council to erect directional signs

³ Taken from AA Ireland Web Site

- d. Please note that it is an offence to tamper with AA Directional Signs. Any tampering will result in a direct fine of up to €400
- e. Text on AA Signs is limited to 14 characters across, including spaces and 4 lines down - however we recommend that you keep your text to a minimum to ensure greater exposure of your event/exhibition to drivers.
- f. Please ensure that you give at least 2 weeks notice to AA Signs Department for events/exhibitions requiring directional signage for administration purposes.

The AA can be contacted at:

Republic of Ireland: <http://www.aaireland.ie/signs/>
Tel: (01) 6179966 Fax: (01) 6179900
Email: aasigns@aaireland.ie

Northern Ireland <http://www.theaa.com/aasigns/>
Tel: 0800 731 7003

Do you have internal signage for your festival/event site?

This can contribute in a positive way to the perceived friendliness of the festival or event. It must be possible for all attendees to find their way easily around the site, by following a coordinated signage system. These signs can be prepared cheaply on 'Corrie board' which is a material that looks like a plastic form of cardboard. You need to consider the signage for the following facilities within your festival or event public areas:

- a. Exits from car parks to main festival/event areas
- b. Return route to all car parks
- c. Mobility impaired facilities including parking
- d. Admission ticket booths
- e. Information booth
- f. Organisers office
- g. Lost children and first aid
- h. Toilets
- i. Food and beverage outlets
- j. Drinking water points
- k. ATMs if available on site
- l. Meeting point
- m. Main areas where concerts/entertainments/shows take place
- n. Bins and composting/recycling facilities.

Handling Queues

Do you have an effective queue management strategy?

It is important that you give careful thought to how queues will be managed on site during the festival or event. There could be queues for:

- a. Admission tickets
- b. Car parking
- c. Food & beverage
- d. Access to specific displays
- e. Exit from car park.

Long queues for car parking or admission tickets can encourage negative opinion of the festival or event in advance of visitors entering the site/venue. There are possible solutions. One is to place clearly visible markers or signs at strategic points indicating the approximate time to the top of the queue. All visitors should have sight of one of these markers regardless of where they are in the queuing system. This is a simple idea, but it works.

If long queues are anticipated signage should be available that indicates the route to the nearest toilet facilities.

VIPs and Sponsors

Do you provide for VIPs and Sponsors during the Festival/Event?

VIPs are usually invited to the opening of a festival or event, and it is preferable if their partners are also invited. Because they are your invited guests they must be treated with respect and given the recognition that their office or standing deserves.

Dedicated car parking beside the entrance to the festival/event arena is recommended for VIPs and Sponsors.

It is recommended that you appoint a 'minder' for each VIP or a small group of VIPs. The responsibility of this person will be to look after the needs of the VIPs, including:

- a. Meet on arrival at car park
- b. Provide copy of festival programme
- c. Escort them to the Reception
- d. Introduce to festival/event Chairman, and to other VIPs

- e. Get them drinks and refreshments
- f. Escort them to the official opening
- g. Show them to their priority seats
- h. If any VIPs are expected to speak at the official opening then the minder should be aware of that. The minder should brief each VIPs on the order of speakers, and from where they will be speaking.
- i. Escort to car at end of function.

Sponsors should be facilitated in a similar way, keeping in mind that they are providing finance or benefit in kind for your festival or event. They would normally have priority seating over and above most other VIPs, and they must be greeted by the festival/event Chairman on arrival and departure. Be aware of the publicity needs of sponsors and do not forget to have them included in appropriate press photographs.

If possible arrange for sponsors to go back stage to meet the artists.

Official Opening

Do you have an Official Opening Function?

Thankfully not very many festivals and events are opened off the back of a truck, as used to happen frequently in years gone by. Remember that the style of the official opening will set up expectations, good or bad, in the minds of all attendees. Your stage for the official opening must create an instant 'wow factor', achieved by layout, decoration and professional presentation by the Master of Ceremonies (MC) and speakers.

The following are key aspects of stage layout:

- a. Safety issues must be foremost in your mind
- b. All seats should have name cards for all VIPs, sponsors and others who will be on stage for the official opening
- c. Access to the stage should be by way of a well constructed stairway with handrail, and non-slip steps
- d. Power and lighting requirements in place and tested
- e. Public address system to be in place and tested before all attendees arrive for the official opening

- f. Proper podium with adjustable microphone
- g. The stage floor should have a suitable covering
- h. Skirting to be provided to the front of the stage
- i. Banner for main sponsors neatly displayed if that is part of the sponsor agreement with the festival/event
- j. A second set of stairs should be provided off the rear of the stage for emergency purposes
- k. It is strongly recommended that you appoint a 'Stage Manager' who will control all aspects of the stage party
- l. The Stage Manager will escort everyone to their seats, and signal the MC when the opening can begin
- m. The MC is responsible for calling all speakers in correct order, and briefly thanking them after their address
- n. Sponsors must be recognised by name/Company in the Chairman's speech
- o. Limit all speeches and the official opening to a total of 30 minutes maximum. Boredom will set in after that.

Do you have an official 'opener' for your Festival/Event?

The obvious person may not be the most appropriate. You have to ask yourself some serious questions on this issue as follows.

In trying to decide who to invite to open your festival or event, consider the following types of personality:

- a. Political
- b. Social
- c. Entertainment
- d. Tourism
- e. Business
- f. Overseas personality.

A political opener may give you the opportunity to play local politics for the future good of the festival or event. A social figure may attract good local and regional media coverage for your festival or event, as will a figure from the entertainment world. If you are trying to grow your festival or event in terms of overseas visitors then a tourism figure may be most appropriate. A business personality may be chosen because of sponsorship connections or local agendas to be facilitated.

You must consider:

- a. The official opener's expectations
- b. Your expectations of them, and
- c. Appoint an experienced 'minder'.

Festival and Event Marketing

Introduction

There are many definitions of what marketing is about. A good basic definition is that marketing is about “meeting customer expectations at a profit”. Key words here are “expectations” and “profit”. It is possible for your Team/Committee to make a profit but still fail to meet the expectations of your customers or visitors. The result is unhappy visitors who may not return to your festival or event next year. A festival or event which is initially profitable, therefore, can not necessarily be deemed a successful one.

The importance of effectively marketing your festival or event should not be underestimated. Without successful marketing, you cannot expect to attract to your festival or event sufficient numbers of visitors to ensure that you reach the financial targets which your Team/Committee should have set for themselves.

It is therefore essential that your festival/event Team/Committee has a Marketing Plan. Do remember that regardless of the size of your festival or event, such a plan is indispensable

The Marketing Plan

Do you have a Marketing Plan?

It is absolutely essential that you have a basic Marketing Plan for your festival or event. Drafting this for the first time will take some thought. After that the annual updating of the Marketing Plan for the following year will be much easier.

There are four variables that are used in a Marketing Plan as follows:

- a. Product – the festival or event, and everything that is part of it, such as the location, the people involved, and the overall visitor experience
- b. Price – what you charge for car parking, admissions, programmes, on site food and beverage?
- c. Promotion – the actions that you take to attract visitors to your festival or event
- d. Place – how do potential visitors get information about your festival or event? The Tourist Information Office, brochure or Internet as examples.

The aim of the marketing mix of the “Four Ps” as it is known is to drive visitors to attend your festival or event. Each of these variables can be changed. You can increase the price of admission tickets, or change the product by extending the festival or event by one extra day. You can change the way that you promote the festival or event by taking advertising on local radio. Finally you can change the ‘place’ by deciding to mail literature to people who attended the festival or event in previous year(s).

Making any of the changes outlined above will have consequences for the festival or event, and the potential outcome to these changes must be considered carefully, before making the change.

Market Analysis

Do you have a profile of the existing visitors to the festival or event?

It is very important that you have some information on the types of visitors that are attending your festival or event. Successful marketing flows from a complete understanding of your visitors – who they are, where they live and the leisure needs they seek to satisfy. The post event evaluation techniques suggested later in this Guide will provide you with solutions on how to undertake market research.

The following is some of the data that you should try and get about your visitors:

- g. Age
- h. Group size
- i. Group make-up – families, couples, visitors on their own
- j. Where do they come from ?
- k. How often have they visited the festival or event?
- l. How much do they spent at the festival or event?

Working Assumptions

Do assumptions underpin the marketing of the festival/event?

The Marketing Plan for your festival or event must be based on certain well thought out assumptions, examples include:

- a. That all sponsors will between them contribute not less than €12,500
- b. That a Fáilte Ireland marketing grant will be available next year
- c. That the local hotel will co-operate with the festival/event in a joint advertising campaign on RTE Radio
- d. That the festival/event will secure a media partner.

Obviously changes will have to be made in the Marketing Plan if any of these assumptions, or other ones that may apply to your festival or event, change for the better or worse.

Assumptions by definition will not always be correct, but they provide a working basis for advance planning of a festival or event.

Marketing Strategy

Do you have a Marketing Strategy?

We have looked at the need for:

- A Marketing Plan
- The profile of existing visitors
- Situational analysis
- Working assumptions.

Now you need to consider the marketing strategy.

The marketing strategy will involve consideration of the following issues:

- a. Positioning of the festival or event. This might involve the promotion of the event as the main game fishing competition in Ulster next year.
- b. Key target markets – for example game fishermen from the west of Ireland and Northern Ireland and angling visitors from England.
- c. Pricing policy – here you must decide what you will charge as entry fees for the fishing competition.
- d. The festival mission statement – this was considered in the Festival and Event Management section of the CD.

Objectives

Have you set marketing objectives?

It is important to set marketing objectives. Generally the marketing objectives will be a sub set of the objectives in your event's strategic business plan.

Festival/Event Logo

Does your Festival or Event have a Logo?

A logo is part of the branding of a festival or event, and the following are some points to keep in mind if you are developing a logo:

- a. The logo must be right from Day One. It is difficult and undesirable to have to change it a year or so after starting to use it.
- b. The logo should express something visually about your festival or event. It must mean something to people who have no connection with the Team/Committee or the organisation of the Festival or event.
- c. It should be capable of reproduction on different materials - print, T-Shirts, caps, banners etc.
- d. You should use it on all your literature, advertising, banners, posters, back-drops, letter heads, compliments slips, web site, and sales items that may be produced by your Team/Committee.

Marketing & Public Relations

Media Plan

Do you have a media plan?

A Media Plan is a plan showing all purchased advertising and demonstrates graphically the distribution of the media over time. The plan gives 'at-a-glance' information on the place, size, cost, type and concentration of advertising and marketing activities for your event.

The Media Plan Template is available to download from the CD-ROM.

Advertising

Do you promote the festival/event through paid advertising?

You need to consider if advertising should be placed directly by the Team/Committee or whether an advertising agency may be a more productive use of your time and resources.

Possible advertising opportunities for your festival or event include the following:

- a. Radio – national
- b. Radio – local
- c. Television
- d. National Newspapers
- e. Regional/local newspapers.

It is most important that all advertisements give a crystal clear message, and this is especially important with radio or TV advertising, where the listener cannot go over the advertisement again to check details. The key information is covered by:

- a. What is it?
- b. Where is it on?
- c. When is it on?
- d. Cost indications may also be relevant.

Print Production

Do you print a festival/event brochure?

Most festivals and events print literature of some kind. There is a likely need for two print pieces; one general advance brochure or leaflet, and a more detailed brochure with the programme that is available perhaps two weeks in advance of the festival or event. The following points are of key importance:

- a. The brochure or leaflet must be written with the needs of the potential festival/event visitor in mind. Therefore it may not necessarily be the kind of brochure that all Team/Committee members will like.
- b. The brochure or leaflet must answer the following questions: -
 - i. What is the festival or event?
 - ii. Where is it taking place?
 - iii. When is it taking place?
 - iv. Why is it taking place?
 - v. What will attendance cost me and my family?

The following are some other questions that the potential visitor may expect to see answered in the brochure:

- i. What about car parking?
 - ii. Is the site child/mobility impaired friendly?
 - iii. Are there catering facilities?
 - iv. What about wet weather facilities?
- c. Decide the print run carefully. How are you going to distribute the brochures? Tourist Information Offices will not necessarily take thousands of copies, and the Tourism Ireland overseas offices will probably only take a few copies for file purposes.
- d. When should brochure distribution start? This is a critical issue and one that your Team/Committee should consider seriously. Quite often a Team/Committee may issue two brochures for their festival or event. The advance brochure will usually give outline programme details, and is designed to generate advance interest in the festival or event. This brochure should issue on the Irish market about 4 to 6 weeks in advance. The more detailed brochure with programme details should issue not more than two weeks in advance. You may be circulating this brochure through Tourist Information Offices and accommodation premises within a 30 kilometre radius of your venue.

If you are promoting your festival or event in overseas markets then the distribution of the advance brochure to appropriate Tour Operators must take place some months in advance.

- e. It is recommended you get three quotations for all brochures and leaflets.
- f. Remember that the brochure or leaflet will be all that many recipients will have to decide whether to attend your festival/event or not. The brochure must be exciting, inviting, clear, and must contain all the relevant information.
- g. Good design therefore is absolutely essential, and it is worth paying a professional designer.

- h. If you use maps of any kind in the brochure or leaflet you will probably need an Ordnance Survey Permit. Check this out at an early date.
- i. Do you own the copyright of all photographs to be used in the brochure, or have you purchased reproduction rights for your festival/event literature? Have you requested permission from the people featured in the photographs in your literature?
- j. Brochure covers must be designed in such a way that they invite the recipient to open it. A poorly designed, dull cover with bad photographs may end up in the rubbish bin, and do nothing for your festival or event. The event title, location, county and dates must appear clearly on the front cover. Brochures for overseas distribution must contain the word 'Ireland'.

Distribution of Event Literature

Do you circulate festival/event brochures?

Generally the following should receive appropriate supplies of your festival/event brochure or leaflet:

- a. Registered/Approved accommodation within a 30km radius
- b. Tourist Information Offices/Centres
- c. Sponsors
- d. Media contacts
- e. Ferry ports/Airports
- f. Chamber of Commerce.

Direct Mail

Do you run a direct mail campaign?

Some direct mail campaigns can be successful, but there are a number of key issues as follows:

- a. The quality of the list of names and addresses that you have available. Are some of these old and liable to be out of date? If the list is taken from some of your festival/event attendees of three years ago, then many of them may not be correct –

some people may be deceased and others may have moved house, or gave incomplete addresses in the first place.

- b. The quality of the literature that you send out in the campaign is extremely important. The literature that you normally use to promote your festival or event may be quite unsuitable for this purpose. It is likely to be regarded as just more 'junk mail' unless you can make the leaflet really attractive visually, and tempt people to read it.
- c. You can purchase lists of names and addresses but you will probably find that these are unsuitable as targets for your festival or event.
- d. Consider carefully the cost of a direct mail campaign in the context of the likely return.
- e. Do remember that a 5% - 7% positive return may be high.
- f. The announcement⁴ that Postal Codes are to be introduced in Ireland over the next few years will greatly facilitate much more closely targeted direct mail campaigns.

Perhaps it may be possible for you to link with a hotel or guesthouse who would share the production and mail costs with you.

Website

Does your Festival or Event have a website?

The Web, or the Internet, is fast becoming one of the key ways of marketing a product or service, and tourism is no exception. On the Internet there are approximately 129 million references to festivals⁵, and 1.9 billion references to events⁶.

In Ireland, 685,000 households (47%) have access to the internet and a further 14.4% of householders stated that they use the internet elsewhere including work, school/college, internet cafes and libraries.

⁴ 23rd May 2005

⁵ Source: <http://www.google.ie> 24th October 2006

⁶ Source: <http://www.google.ie> 24th October 2006

The most popular activity on the internet related to Information search and online services, e.g. finding information about goods and services, travel and accommodation.

In the 12 months to June 2005, over 587,000 persons had ordered goods or services from the internet for private use. The most popular types of goods and services ordered on the internet were Travel and holiday accommodation (318,600), Films/music (162,300) and Tickets for events (159,300).⁷

The Internet is now widely used for travel planning purposes and approximately 29% of Germans use the Internet for travel planning. The figure for Britain is 39% and France 33%⁸.

A good website therefore is becoming an essential marketing and promotional tool for many festivals and events – yes, even the smaller ones too! Before you brief a website designer for a new site, or site upgrade there are two key issues that you should consider:

- What are you trying to achieve with your website?
- Who are your target users?

Here are some important points in regard to website design:

- a. Keep it simple
- b. A site of 4/5 pages is probably adequate for your needs
- c. Use plenty of white space on each page (this makes the information much easier to read).
- d. Avoid clutter, flying banners, flashing boxes
- e. Have a straightforward navigation system from page to page.
- f. The main menus should ideally be visible on every page; this makes the navigation quite easy for the user

⁷ All statistics on Irish internet usage referenced from the Central Statistics Office, Information and Society Telecommunications 2005.

⁸ Visitor Attitudes Survey, Fáilte Ireland (2005)

- g. Remember that in about 15 seconds a visitor to your site for the first time will decide whether to stay with your site, or move to another one
- h. Provide the contacts for your Festival or Event on the first or Home Page
- i. Have a look at this web site - www.crickboatshow.co.uk as a good example of web site design
- j. Ensure that your web site is updated before you roll out your marketing campaign.

The design of your site is just the beginning. The site must be registered with various search engines, if other web users are to be able to find your festival or event site. Your website designers will usually be able to arrange this registration. It is important that you check on a regular basis that the search engines where you are registered can still find your site. This is easy – just put the name of your festival or event into each search engine and see if it finds you.

Another way to improve your listing with search engines is to get your website listed on other sites. There are many websites which will publish a description of your festival/event and include your contact details and web address.

Here is another really important point. You must update your site on a regular basis, perhaps a few times each month. You should develop the skills to do this yourself rather than depending on third parties, and their associated ongoing fees.

AOIFE members can have their website reviewed and receive valuable feedback.

Do you promote your Festival or Event website?

There is little point in having a web site if it is not actively promoted. Here are some ideas:

- a. The website address should feature on all festival/event literature in a prominent place.
- b. Consider producing web cards, about the size of a business card. They are cheap to print and you should distribute

them widely. During the festival or event is also a good time for distribution. These cards should be printed on a heavy matt card. Both sides of a web card in circulation are illustrated here.



It may be possible to have your festival or event linked to the website of Fáilte Ireland's regional office in your area. This is a good way of getting potential visitor referrals to your site.

Consumer/Trade promotions

Do you attend consumer & trade promotions?

These promotions take place in Ireland and in key overseas markets, and many of these are attended (organised in some cases by Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland Ltd) by Tourism Ireland Ltd and Fáilte Ireland's regional offices. A full list of these promotions is available on the Fáilte Ireland web site.

However, overseas promotions are not normally recommended for small and medium scale festivals and events. Participation costs can be high for a smaller festival or event and the direct returns may well be limited. You may be able to enter into an arrangement with your nearest Fáilte Ireland regional office to carry some of your literature at such promotions.

Consumer promotions also take place in Ireland and some of these such as Holiday World (Belfast, Dublin and Cork) may be suitable for the promotion of your festival or event.

Guide Books

Do you seek inclusion in Guide Books and Visitor Guides?

If you have a well established annual festival or event you should submit the details to the many travel and visitor guides that are available in any good bookshop. It will probably cost nothing.

Marketing Partnerships

Have you considered a marketing partnership?

It may be possible to develop a marketing partnership with a local hotel or guesthouse that is advertising on radio for weekend breaks at the time of your festival. Perhaps they will agree to add a line at the end of their advertisement '.....and visit the great Tydavnet Parish Show next weekend'.

Festival/Event Links

Has your Team/Committee tried to develop links with other Festivals or Events?

The development of links with other festivals or events can sometimes be a useful way of extending your promotional activity.

Press Releases

Do you issue Press Releases?

Press Releases are the usual method of communicating details to the media either nationally or regionally. You should approach the print, radio, and TV media in your area in advance of the festival or event if you feel that you have a story of regional or national interest.

The following points are important:

- a. Press Releases should be just one page
- b. The main information should be contained in the first paragraph
- c. Release date and time should be detailed at the start of the Press Release
- d. Press Releases should end with the contacts details for the person who can provide further details

- e. Ensure that you have the correct media contact: name, title and email address.

Media Coverage

Do you keep a record of media coverage received?

It is important to keep copies of all media coverage received for record purposes. It may be a requirement of grant agencies to produce a copy of your media coverage.

Photographic Library

Do you maintain a photographic library?

You should maintain a library of images from previous festivals available for media use. Remember that if these images contain recognisable people you should have their permission to include them in those photographs. Also it is essential that you have written permission to reproduce all other images in your library.

The Issue of Innovation

Have you recently addressed the issue of innovation?

If festivals and events do not change and grow they may well stagnate and die. It is therefore important that you have innovation in mind constantly.

The introduction of new ideas and concepts to the festival or event will keep it fresh and appealing to potential visitors. You must avoid the problem of 'we were there last year and it never changes, and we will not go again this year'.