



Top tips for community venues organising a cultural event: funding, pricing, social media and food health and safety

[East Durham Creates](#) and [ARC Stockton](#) worked together to create a package of top tips for community venues who are interested in organising cultural events.

We spoke to community centres, partners, groups and artists what worries they have (if any) when putting on arts events and activities. The following areas were the most popular things people wanted to learn more about:

- 1) Money and where to find funding
- 2) Pricing events for a community which have become used to free events
- 3) Social media and digital marketing
- 4) Safeguarding and risk assessment with a focus on catering

Here are our top tips on each topic, written by ARC, Stockton

Top Tips for Writing a Funding Application

Whether writing a funding bid for the first time or the 30th time it can be hard to know where to begin. Here are some tips on writing a funding application:

1. As the event organiser you will be best placed to write the funding bid as your passion and enthusiasm about the project will shine through. A good place to start is with your budget, a list of what your project is going to involve and what your project is aiming to do or change. It's also worth writing two or three really clear aims for the project, this will be especially useful when evaluating the project.
2. Be clear on what you want to achieve and how the money available will help you do this. It may be worth saying that this event/project will not go ahead without additional funding.
3. Make sure you ask at least two other people to read it through as if they know nothing about the event. This is an effective way to see if you have missed the point all together. Don't be afraid to state the obvious.
4. Ask yourself the following questions when writing the proposal, who is going to benefit from the project? How are they going to benefit? And how are you going to get them involved?
5. Allow plenty of time. Find out the closing date for the fund and plan to submit ahead of that date, block out some time in your calendar to complete the application.

6. Always read the guidance, funders are not trying to trip you up and you could waste a lot of time writing a bid when you may not even be eligible. The guidance will also let you know what they are looking for so you can highlight the areas that match their criteria.
7. Don't be afraid to seek advice from the funder. You can always ring or email if you are worried about your eligibility. Don't worry about asking a difficult or unusual question they will almost certainly have heard it before.
8. Make sure your budget balances. If you're asking for 10k make sure your budget says you will spend 10k.

Good Luck!

Top Tips for Pricing

Deciding on a price to charge for tickets for performances and activities can be challenging, balancing the need to generate income with the aim of attracting audiences. Here are some tips on pricing:

1. Consider whether your audiences are basing their decision on the price, or on other factors, such as quality, accessibility (in terms of your location and therefore transport required), or attractiveness of the event.
2. Price is less about cost and more about value, so rather than thinking about what audiences can afford to pay, think about whether they think the price will offer good value.
3. Pricing tickets too low will diminish the value of your offer, as it implies to audiences that your events are cheap and therefore of low quality.
4. Compare your prices to other similar experiences that your audiences might be paying for, e.g. what do parents pay to go swimming or an activity centre with their children. How does the price of that compare to the price of bringing them to see a performance at your venue?
5. Don't be afraid to use special offers – discounted tickets can help to make prices affordable; make people feel special; and make feel people like they have secured a bargain.
6. Including extras in the price can also be attractive for audiences so consider costing in a free drink, sweets, raffle ticket etc.
7. Don't be afraid to be bold and generous – tactics such as offering refunds if people don't like the show can help encourage people to take a risk on buying a ticket. Evidence suggests very few people ever actually ask for a refund, and even if they do, they are more likely to come back another time if they don't feel they have wasted their money on their first visit.
8. Consider using Pay What You Decide pricing, a model successfully piloted at ARC Stockton and now being used around the world. You can download a free PWYD toolkit here: <http://arconline.co.uk/get-involved/artists/resources>.
9. Most importantly, talk to your audiences! Ask them after the event whether they thought it was good value for money, and whether they would be prepared to pay more for something similar in the future.

Top Tips for Social Media

There is no one size fits all solution for using social media effectively, but here are some tips which, combined, should help you find the approach that works for you:

1. Spend some time thinking about your online audience – who are they? What do they like and dislike? What interests and excites them? Remember that social media is more of a conversational tool to engage with people than a marketing channel. Put yourself in the position of your target audience scrolling through their news feed or timeline – what would you respond to?
2. Follow people and organisations that interest you. They'll probably be posting content that you can share with your followers. Listen to conversations online and then respond to comments.
3. Share images – the social media landscape is a noisy one and an engaging image can help you stand out from the crowd. Content with relevant images will get more views than content without.
4. Use hashtags – the #hashtag makes your own content discoverable and allows you to find and engage with relevant content from other social media users based on a common theme or interest.
5. Build relationships by talking to people – interacting with your audience and with other organisations makes you appear much more human, something which everyone appreciates. Ask questions, respond to people's feedback, repost content and maintain a regular presence on your networks.
6. Be consistent – across all of the channels that you use, including post frequency and engagement. And while it's important to post a variety of content, don't forget to maintain your 'brand' tone of voice, which helps to develop your relationship and loyalty with your audience.
7. Manage your social media time effectively – lack of time and resource can be an issue, so scheduling tools such as Hootsuite (www.hootsuite.com) can help you manage your platforms.
8. Analyse past content to improve posts – Twitter Analytics and Facebook Insights can help you work out what people engage with most and what content struggles. Use the posts that are resonating with people to help you plan your future content.

Top Tips for Event Food Health and Safety

When catering for an event there are a number of things you must consider to ensure food safety. These include:

1. Equipment. When planning ahead you will need to check with the venue what equipment will be available for use to cook, reheat and serve food. It may be necessary for you to supply your own equipment.
2. Waste. When planning you must consider how you will collect waste in the venue and how you will dispose of that waste.

3. Staffing. At an event it is often common for temporary/agency staff or volunteers to help during the cooking or service of food. It is important that anyone assisting in the kitchen, or with service, is suitably trained or supervised.

4. Cooking and cooling. Ensure cooked high risk food (e.g. chicken, meat, rice, and curry sauces) reaches a minimum core temperature sufficient to kill any food poisoning bacteria present. To achieve this, it is recommended a minimum core temperature of 75°C is reached for 30 seconds. If you cool the food, it must be cooled as quickly as possible before placing it in the refrigerator. It is recommended that the cooling process is less than 90 minutes.

5. Transportation. When transporting the food, the food must be in suitable, easy to clean containers and covered. Cardboard or wooden boxes are not suitable containers for foods that are ready for consumption.

6. Holding hot food at the venue. If the food is delivered hot to the venue or reheated it must then be hot held until service. This is a critical point in ensuring the food served is safe. The food must be hot held at a temperature of 63°C or above. If food cannot be hot held it must be served within two hours of the initial cooking.

7. Service of cold food at the venue. Where high risk food requires chilling, e.g. yoghurt, cream, desserts, cold buffets, this must be kept at 8°C or below or served within a maximum of 4 hours after it is removed from the fridge.

8. Review. It is important for you to review your food and event health and safety regularly to identify any areas that have become hazardous or areas that could be improved.

Please refer to the [food health and safety appendix](#) accompanying this document for more information ([available to download from the East Durham Creates website](#)).