

The Fringe Guide to Participant Development and the Arts Industry Office



The Arts Industry Office is the service provided for all the promoters, presenters, bookers, venues, festival programmers and talent scouts who come to Edinburgh every year and who use the Fringe as a vital resource for their programming, networking and professional exploration needs.

How does it work for accredited members of the arts industry?

Accreditation

Arts industry professionals access the service through an online accreditation process which gathers information about their professional needs and what they are looking for during the Festival. We use this information to assess the opportunities they, or their organisation, are able to offer and have offered in the recent past.

Services and resources

The office provides successful accreditees with a variety of services and resources to help them make the most out of their time at the Fringe. These include easy access to reviews and industry news, industry networking events, extra information on Fringe shows, company contact details as well as help and advice about navigating the Fringe and Edinburgh itself. If you wish to, you can also send us your show's touring pack and we can make it available to accreditees.

Complementary ticketing service

While we encourage accreditees to purchase their tickets wherever possible, we also offer a complimentary ticketing service to some accreditees. This is a carefully managed service with the aim to help accreditees see a greater breadth of work at the Fringe than their own budgets would allow. This service is not to subsidise the cost of tickets altogether, and access is only granted to programmers and bookers who have a proven track record of directly 'buying' work.

How does it work for participants?

Engaging with accreditees

A common misconception about the Arts Industry Office is that we are able to hand over a list of every registered arts industry professional that is in town. Our database contains information on over a thousand individuals from all over the world and we have an obligation to handle their data carefully. It's also important to remember that these people have extremely busy schedules while in Edinburgh and do not want to be bombarded with emails about work that is unsuitable for their purposes. Therefore we suggest that you are as strategic as possible with your approach and think carefully about whom to target for your show.

With that in mind we do ask arts industry accreditees to indicate if they are happy to have their details shared where it is relevant to their interests. As a result, there will be some very specific contact lists available to you from the Arts Industry Office once you have engaged with the Participant Development service. For example, lists of UK touring venues that are interested in small-scale new writing.

Complimentary ticketing service

When you register your show with the Fringe Society, you will be asked if you are interested in touring or professional development opportunities. If neither of these boxes are ticked then we will not include your show in the complimentary ticketing service. If you are interested and your venue registers your show on your behalf make sure to ask them to tick the relevant box(es).

Below are the key terms of the Arts Industry Office ticket policy:

- All requests are assessed against the originally expressed ambitions of the accreditee in question and only relevant/realistic requests are processed. For example we will not process a complimentary ticket for a stand-up comedy promoter if your show is a large-scale touring circus piece.
- Accreditation does not guarantee complimentary tickets – all requests are subject to availability and approval by the Arts Industry Office and/or the company/producer of the show. We ensure that accreditees are aware that the cost of these tickets is likely to be charged to the company.
- There is a maximum of one complimentary ticket per organisation per show, subject to availability
- Upon receipt of a complimentary ticket, the accreditee agrees to share their contacts details with you, the artist/producer/company of the show, so that they may be contacted by you for feedback.



Participant Development is the service that focuses on providing Fringe participants with advice on their creative and professional development and assists you in maximising the opportunities available to you at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Key elements of this service include bespoke one-to-one advice; extensive publications and online resources; opportunities for networking and professional development (the Fringe Central Events Programme delivered at Fringe Central); advice on how to engage with the arts industry professionals who might be interested in your work and extensive information on how to create life for your show beyond the Edinburgh Fringe, for example by touring.

You can engage with this service by making an appointment or by emailing information about your show and your objectives for participating in the Fringe. In this way, you allow us to effectively advise you and 'match make' your show with the appropriate arts industry professionals.

We are available all year round to provide advice and guidance on a wide range of industry topics and anything else relating to your creative career beyond the Fringe. If you have any questions, concerns or would just like to tell us how you got on after the Fringe then you can email us on artistadvice@edfringe.com.

Things to remember when talking to the Participant Development team

- **The show**

Be prepared to speak coherently and in depth about your show's content, style and themes. What is it? How did you create it? What is it about? What audience is it designed for? What makes it special? If you articulate your work clearly to us then you will be able to sell it to a promoter.

- **The company/artist**

We want to know as much as possible about your company and/or you as an artist. Describe your practise, your previous achievements and where you think you are at in your career. Think about your professional supporters, for example the programmers who have booked your work or expressed strong interest in it, artists with whom you have successfully collaborated.

- **Your objectives**

Consider your reasons for participating in the Fringe thoroughly before coming to speak to us. For example, if you have come to the Fringe to generate touring opportunities, domestic or international, then think about where you want to tour and why. Why do you think your show/company is ready for touring?

- **Research**

It's true to say that it is better to describe your work on its own merit, avoiding comparisons to anything else. However, there is no harm in researching the achievements and trajectory of artists or companies whose work you feel is similar to your own. Research into their regular presenting partners or touring patterns may help you understand what sort of people would be interested in your show and therefore whom you might usefully target during your stay in Edinburgh. You are in charge – the Participant Development service cannot do the work for you; we can only offer advice and assistance for companies that are being pro-active about achieving their goals.

- **Remain practical**

It is important to have realistic goals. If you come to the Fringe with a very specific or particularly ambitious objective – international touring, transferring to television – you must be prepared for the possibility of not achieving these goals, regardless of how good your strategy is! This is particularly relevant to the Arts Industry Office; if a promoter requests a ticket to your show this is not an automatic pass to success and stardom.

- **Stay positive**

You might find that after seeing your show they are not interested. In a case like this, it is good practice to ask for feedback. This can be difficult for both of you but be positive, listen and learn from any feedback. It might have nothing to do with the quality of your work. They may have a very specific remit, are operating under particular constraints technically or be restricted in terms of their audience, timings or budget. Don't be afraid to ask for recommendations of other venues who might find your work of interest.

There is a host of other information available on our website, including guides on Touring, Networking and Fundraising which can all be found [here](#).

If you would like to get in touch with the Participant Development team please e-mail artistadvice@edfringe.com.

Do your homework.

It's usually quite simple to gain a good deal of useful information from a promoter's website. Make sure you understand their curatorial brief in terms of the type of work they tend to programme and the size and technical capacity of their venue or venues.

Don't harass them.

They are dealing with a lot of artists and seeing a great many shows, you aren't the only person seeking their attention. If you don't get a response it doesn't necessarily mean that they won't turn up at your performance anyway, but pursuing them too avidly is usually counter-productive. If they are interested, they will be in touch.

Do make sure that the requested material you give or send them is professional, high-quality and contains all the key information about your show.

Don't send footage of your entire show or provide them with the full script unless they ask for it, it's usually not helpful.

Video footage is useful only if it is a short but high quality representation of your work (five minutes maximum.)

Do remember that promoters talk to each other.

The circuit of influential arts industry professionals is actually rather small and they all know each other. If one of them has had a bad experience with an artist or if companies are bad-mouthing promoters or each other, then you can be sure that they will be discussing this with each other in the bar! On a positive note, if one such promoter sees your show and likes it, you may well have a stampede of their colleagues coming to see your performances.

Do have all the relevant information that they might need to hand.

Make sure you have contact details, tour information (including numbers on the road, technical requirements and any educational wraparound that you may be able to deliver) and costs readily available so that you can communicate the basic, practical aspects of booking your show quickly and clearly.

Don't bombard them with unwanted hard copy information in Edinburgh; most of that ends up in hotel bins.

Try and keep your promotional material down to the bare essentials and agree with each individual what, if anything, they would like to receive from you by email or post once they have returned home. If they ask you for something then make sure you give them specifically what they have asked for (file formats, tech specs) and don't delay your response.

Do be professional.

Your work could be extraordinarily good and absolutely suitable but a bad attitude could ruin your chances. Promoters tend to work with people they actually like, so charm is at a premium.

Don't feel that the promoter owes you something simply because you have their contact details and have had a brief correspondence.

Don't add them to your general mailing list unless they ask – by all means ask them if you can add them to your mailing list, but don't just do it as standard.

Do network.

Get out there and be seen, make sure that you are always 'on' and you are always professional. There are hundreds of other artists competing for exactly the same thing so don't underestimate the value of having a really good conversation with someone. Make use of any existing contacts or supporters to introduce you; it's an old adage but still relevant – it's not what you know, it's who you know.

Do avoid sending lengthy emails and lots of attachments unsolicited; promoters won't appreciate it.

Pre-Fringe

Decide why you're coming

Start thinking about why you are coming to the Fringe and what you want out of your experience.

Create achievable objectives

Think about what stage you are at in your career and what the next logical step for you would be.

Research

Start doing some research into recent Fringe successes and the trajectory of successful artists with whom you feel you have a similarity.

Prepare touring information

(see our [Guide to Touring](#)).

Inform current contacts

Think about who you already know and how they might be able to help: programmers who have booked your work before, previous collaborators, journalists who have reviewed you favourably. Make them aware of your Fringe plans and invite them to see a performance. Where appropriate, ask them to alert their own network of contacts to your performances.

Contact the Participant Development Coordinator at the Fringe Society (see [Section 2](#) of this document).

Invite people

Based on your research and advice from the Fringe office, create a targeted invitation list of industry professionals who you think would be interested in your work. Send them an invitation to see the show during its run in Edinburgh as early as possible as they start building their schedules early.

During the Fringe

Follow up

Send a gentle reminder to those on your initial round of invitations.

Visit the Arts Industry Office

Touch base with the Participant and Industry Development Manager and arrange a meeting to discuss who else to invite whilst you are in Edinburgh.

Network

Take advantage of as many events and opportunities as possible. Talk to the office to find out about specific networking events and read our [Guide to Networking](#).

Keep track of who's coming

Through ongoing dialogue with the Arts Industry Office and your venue, keep track of who is coming to see your show and make contact with them.

Arrange meetings

Take advantage of the opportunity to meet people face to face to get feedback and/or discuss your show further with anyone who is interested in it.

Be prepared to provide touring information

Provide additional hard copy or electronic information for promoters who request it.

Post Fringe

Evaluation

Consolidate everything you have achieved from your Fringe experience; sales figures, reviews, conversations and feedback from industry professionals.

Update your information pack

Use these resources to supplement your show information pack and to develop conversations with potentially interested bookers.

Create a database for all the contacts you have made.

Maintain the contacts you have made, even if an initial invitation doesn't ensue

Don't bombard them with information but keep promoters up to date with subsequent work and invite them to see performances, particularly if you are playing in a location near to them.



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