



AIF Background

The Association of Independent Festivals (AIF) is the UK's leading festival trade association representing the interests of over 100 music festivals, ranging from 500 to 80,000 capacity. Our members collectively entertain over one million fans every year, and AIF represents half of all festivals in the UK that are 5,000+ capacity.

AIF provides a vital support network for independent festival promoters through members meetings, public facing campaigns and lobbying, producing training events and resources and providing business and related support services to members.

AIF member festivals include some of the most successful and innovative festivals in the UK including the likes of Boomtown Fair, Victorious, Shambala, End of the Road, Boardmasters, Kendal Calling, Dot To Dot, Field Maneuvers, Liverpool Sound City, Belladrum Tartan Heart and many more.

Recent AIF success

- Formed a new All Party Parliamentary Group for Festivals in July 2023
- Launched First Festival - a new initiative to supply 18 year olds with tickets to their first festival for just £18 supported by donations from organisations and the public through a crowdfunder. The initiative will return in 2024 with more partners and an ambition to support 10,000 people to attend their first festival.
- In 2022 AIF relaunched our Safer Spaces at Festivals campaign, designed to tackle sexual violence at events. In 2023 we've expanded our resources to include specific advice on LGBT+ inclusion and spiking.
- Providing ongoing support and advocacy to our 105 strong membership of festivals. Aif membership passed the 100 member mark for the first time in January 2023.

About Festival Congress

Festival Congress is AIF's annual flagship event and the largest gathering of independent festivals in the UK, with 350 industry delegates expected to attend in 2024. Attended by 74%

of AIF members on average, the Congress has rapidly evolved to become a fixture and must attend event in the festival industry calendar, selling out every iteration.

Festival Congress began in 2014, spending 4 years in Cardiff supported by Welsh Government, before moving onto Sheffield for 2018 and 2019. Festival Congress was relaunched post pandemic in 2022 and took place in Bristol, returning there in 2023 and 2024.

Festival Congress is a unique event and an unrivalled opportunity for businesses to present their services to many of the 'difficult to reach' decision makers at festivals.

The conference has a progressive and innovative format, including high profile keynotes, engaging panel sessions, TED x style quick fire lightning talks, breakout workshops and fireside chats with experts and inspiring personalities from across the festival and events world.

Festival Congress Objectives

Festival Congress has 3 key objectives

- To provide a dedicated annual forum for the independent festival community and the sharing of best practice and innovation, alongside addressing challenges and celebrating successes.
- To contribute to the evolution of the independent festival sector, challenging established notions of what a live music industry conference can be and reflecting the creativity of the industry in addition to presenting insight and inspiration from other sectors.
- To provide a highly effective B2B marketplace for trusted suppliers in the industry to engage with independent festival organisers and decision makers in an intimate setting.

Who Attends?

The event has sold out on every edition.

First admission is made available for a period of one month to AIF Festival Members, their teams and Friends of AIF suppliers. Remaining tickets are then put on general sale. Priority is given to independent music festival operators and suppliers to independent music festivals. There is also often interest from a few promoters, local authority Event Teams or venues looking to start festivals or working alongside festivals looking to widen their network or deepen their learning. A limited number of student tickets are available only to the year's Education Partner. No other students are allowed admission. Instead we look to engage with students, HE and FE with a supporting event (ie brunch, mixer, classes) on the day after Congress.

2023 Statistics - Bristol

- 48% male, 52% female attendees

- Majority of attendees in the 25-44 age bracket
- Over half of attendees travelled from outside of Bristol - this is an event that attracts individuals from across the UK
- 79% of attendees rated the overall quality and format of the conference as Excellent or Good
- 96% of attendees would come again
- 93% of attendees would recommend the event to others

Festival Congress Tender 2025 (with an option for 2026 and 2027)

This is a very light touch tender. We are seeking expressions of interest from parties looking to bring Festival Congress to their area.

You are likely a Local Authority, Venue, Government, Arts Council, Sector Development Agency, Economic Development Agency, Cultural Development Agency or Placemaking Agency who has an interest in the independent festival sector.

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR...

Your pitch to us should be at least three sides of A4, but no more than ten pages of A4, text, and perhaps images if you wish, which captures and offers the following :

Specifically, we will need an accessible venue (or choice of venues) capable of holding at least 350 delegates for a mix of group work and breakout sessions across multiple sessions for one full day. The venue needs to serve food or be able to allow food to be bought in by a third party. **In your pitch at least one venue should be identified as a possible daytime Congress space.**

We will need an accessible venue (or choice of venues) capable of holding at least 350 people for an evening event where two catering trucks (which we will source) can park to serve food. **In your pitch at least one venue should be identified as a possible evening space.**

At minimum, the successful host will underwrite (in cash, or in kind) the hire for the day venue and the evening venue, including core technical requirements (ie screens, mics, technicians) to be agreed during this process. An enhanced offer may include covering additional costs of the event (ie towards some or all catering, some or all accommodation, purchase of additional delegate tickets etc). **Your pitch should offer and meet our minimum financial / in-kind requirement with any additional financial or in-kind support you might want to offer. You are welcome to attach conditions or targets to additional if you wish.**

Your pitch should include your reasons for wanting Festival Congress in your area. There's no right answer here other than for you to tell us honestly what the reason is for your pitch to us for our event and for our festival members.

Your pitch should include an overview of the range of accommodation, hotels, transport and any other key access information that would be of interest to meet our delegates needs. We book one hotel as a main hosting for speakers and core staff, so your pitch should include a suggestion of at least one four star hotel or similar to accommodate at least 30 people for a minimum of one night.

This tender is for 2025, with an option that it would roll into the 2026 and 2027 event. **Your pitch should include your initial thoughts on the length of stay Festival Congress should or could have in your area.**

If you wish, we will include you as a partner in the event, with inclusion in the event PR and logo and links across marketing. We will also include a delegate passes to you to use as you wish. **If you have additional things you'd like us to do for you and include, or discuss including, then cover these in your pitch. If you have an idea of a minimum or maximum amount of Congress delegate passes you would want then also indicate that in your pitch.**

Due to the success of Festival Congress as a space for festival operators and suppliers, as of 2024 we are no longer selling tickets to students. Instead, we are exploring an additional opportunity for festival professionals to meet with students the following day. **If there is a cohort of students, HE or FE or similar in your area that you think we should connect with them please include this information in your pitch.**

SCHEDULE

This process is open to all areas of the four nations of the UK, including all the places Congress has already visited since its inception in 2014.

If you have questions, please email john@aiforg.com. Answers given may also then be posted on an updated version of this document for others to read, though we will not share details of interested parties asking questions.

Applications should be sent to AIF CEO John Rostron on john@aiforg.com. The deadline for applications is midnight on 31st December 2023.

We will engage with you during January 2024 and we intend to secure an agreement ready to be announced at Festival Congress 2024 on Thursday 1st February.