

ACCORD PRESENTERS TOOL KIT

WHAT IS ACCORD?

ACCORD was a 2-year pilot project (2011- 2013).

Artists are always seeking new audiences. Communities and schools around Quebec appreciate performances and presentations by live artists. ACCORD connected artists and communities in new and diverse ways.

The launch of the ACCORD website marked the beginning of the active part of the ACCORD Project. In Year 2, ACCORD worked with regional partners to kickstart pilot events in communities around the province, while continuing efforts to develop the online Tool Kit and to recruit new artists and presenters to join the network.

The ACCORD project wrapped in 2013. Some of the information contained in this tool kit may be out of date, but much of the advice is still pertinent. If you have any questions about this document, please contact admin@quebec-elan.org.

ELAN - August 2016

The ACCORD project was made possible through funding by the Canadian Heritage - Development of Official-Language Communities Program and ELAN's partnerships with the Quebec Drama Federation and Quebec Communities Group Network.

Why Present?

ACCORD was designed for busy people who appreciate the value of bringing artists into their communities. The resources developed through ACCORD will help you find musicians, actors, comedians, improv artists,

dancers, filmmakers and visual artists who can help you put on special events, fundraisers and workshops for your local painters, choirs and theatre troupes.

ARTIST RELATIONS

Selection / Programming

Choosing the right performers is not only one of the most exciting aspects of organizing an event, it is also one of the most important. Fortunately, there are measures that you, as a presenter, can take to ensure that your programming choices have the greatest chance of success. A good way to maximize turnout is by actively engaging the community. Reach out to other individuals and groups for help planning and promoting your event. Many organizations find it beneficial to create “artist selection committees” that represent the diversity of tastes and backgrounds found within the community. This enables the presenter to choose performances that appeal to a broad audience. It’s also important to reflect critically on your plans. Do you expect there is interest in your community for this type of performance? Are other organizations already meeting the demand for this type of event? Do you have the technical and venue requirements necessary to host this show? Asking these questions will help you maintain realistic expectations.

Negotiating Fees

Whether you are an artist or a presenter, successful negotiations are key to ensuring your needs are met. Typically, the negotiation process

begins with the presenter contacting the artist (or representative) to make an offer. It is during this initial stage when details such as dates and artist fees are agreed upon. When organizing a performance you may not know how much to pay an artist. To get a better idea, you can check out CARFAC's [Suggested Fee Schedule](#). This gives presenters an idea of best practice rate in the industry. Don't give up if you are concerned you can't afford a particular artist, many performers have flexible rates.

Following negotiations, the presenter will create a contract that includes all the agreed upon terms in addition to any other pertinent details. The artist has until the stipulated expiration date to accept, decline, or amend the contract.

Contacts

A basic contract should include:

- The names and addresses of the parties involved.
- What you want the artist to do.
- Where the event will be held.
- When (date and time) the presentation will take place.
- The length of the performance and intermission periods.
- How much the artist will be paid and any expenses that will be covered.

- When the payment will be processed (as many artists require a portion in advance).
- What type promotion you plan to do.
- Whether the artist will be required to do interviews.
- The type of promotional materials required from the artist (headshot, bio, etc.).
- Pertinent venue details (are there dressing rooms? private washrooms?).
- What technical equipment you can provide.
- An act of God clause
- A language clause
- Any other important details

PRODUCTION/TECHNICAL

Production Timeline

When planning an event, it is important to set out a strategic timeline. This will ensure that you leave yourself plenty of time to take care of important details and that you don't forget anything along the way. For more information on planning an event, take a look at our [sample production timeline](#).

Technical Primer

If you are intending to book a musician, a band, a dance/theatre company or a spoken word artist and you are new to the world of stage production, it will be necessary to get acquainted with some of the key technical elements involved. Needless to say that in order

to put on a successful show, it is imperative that your artist be seen and heard!

The following is a list of basic equipment, which you may need to rent and/or be familiar with operating. This is designed solely as a guide, intended to facilitate your handling of the technical aspects of production- the specifics of what is required, in each instance, will need to be clarified with the artist by way of a [technical rider](#).

Sound

Unless you are presenting in a theatre with good acoustics (i.e. a space especially designed for live music or speech to carry) it is likely you will need some sort of amplification so that the sound can be heard at the back of the room. If you are unfamiliar with sound systems or if you are presenting a band, you may wish to hire an experienced audio technician for your event.

A basic audio set-up, also known as a P.A. system, consists of:

- Microphones (mics) - These come in a variety of types and qualities. A directional mic will capture a specific sound (e.g. a spoken word artist speaking directly into a mic) where as an omni-directional mic can be hung above a stage or attached to the edge to capture a more general sound (e.g. actors in a play). Be careful not to turn your microphone levels up too much or they may create feedback (howl). For directional mics you will likely need stands for each microphone.
- Mixing desk (also known as a mixing board or audio mixer) - This will be used to control the volume and dynamics of amplified audio. Mixing desks can have anywhere from two, to upward of twenty-four channels. The number of channels will determine the number of audio "ins" and "outs", i.e. how many different sound sources you can input and output. Unless you are mixing a live band with

several different voices or instruments, a desk with four to eight channels should be sufficient.

- Amplifier (amp) - The mixing desk outputs to an amplifier, which will then output to a speaker system. Many mixing desks and speakers have built in amps.
- Speakers/Monitors - This is where the audio comes out. Depending on what kind of sound coverage you are looking for, and the size of room, you will need to decide whether one, two or four speakers will be necessary. In the case of amplified or electronic music with heavy bass, you will need to be aware that this will put extra strain on the bass bins and hence, whatever speakers you end up using should be designed to handle this type of sound so that it does not distort. Live bands and musical performers often require "monitors," these are speakers that are placed on the floor at the front of the stage facing the musicians. Monitors allow musicians to hear themselves better while they play.
- Cables - The different components of your PA system will need to be connected using various cables. Typically, XLR cables are used for microphones, 1/4" line cables are used for guitars and instruments, and 1/8" mini jack (line) are used for mp3 players and similar devices. Make sure you have all the necessary cables before your event.

If you are presenting a band, you may also require items such as:

- D.I. box - Allows you to plug guitars, keyboards and other high-impedance inputs directly into the mixing desk.
- Midi cables & instruments - M.I.D.I. stands for Musical Instrument Digital Interface and allows musicians to connect things like keyboards or digital audio effects together. Best to leave this to the musician.

If you are hosting a DJ:

- CDJs or other DJ mixer - special mixing consoles for DJs to mix between songs.
- Turntables - Got to love vinyl albums!

Lighting

If you are producing a show in a venue which is designed for staging performances, it may already be equipped with a lighting grid (i.e. a series of metal pipes connected in a grid pattern above a stage, from which lighting instruments and other equipment can be hung or "rigged"). There are safety regulations in any given venue, according to industry standards, about how these lights can be adjusted- in which case, there is also generally a designated technician.

Otherwise, you will need to consider renting self-erecting stands to which you may attach lights and position to either side in front of the performance area. You can ask your local school, theatre, photographer or disco dj if they have any you could rent or borrow for your event. Party suppliers usually have lighting kits to rent. In some cases, even regular work lights (rentable from your local hardware supply store) may be sufficient.

- Lighting board (also known as the lighting desk, lighting control console or dimmer) - This is like an audio console for light! Each light will have its own channel and its level will be controllable, allowing you to create different "lighting states". If you have a

simple lighting setup, a basic dimmer may be sufficient to allow you to fade lights on and off.

- Lights: PAR cans, Lekos, Fresnels - these are all types of stage lights which connect to the mixing desk / dimmer. Alternately, party/event equipment suppliers will often stock LED lights, which may have inbuilt colour-changing capacity, controllable via a console.
- Gels and Gobos- Coloured gels can be slotted into the front of these light to create different moods or "temperatures" (i.e. warm, cool, etc.) Gobos are essentially a sort of stencil that can also be inserted in front of a light source to produce textures/patterns of light and shadow.

Video

Since it is such a specialized field, when video is an integral part of a show, the artist will usually provide (or advise on) the technical equipment required, oversee the set-up and run the projections him/herself. However, in the case of Powerpoint presentations being offered by artists in the context of a festival, conference or workshop, it will more likely be up to the presenter to rent and set up the equipment.

- Projection Screens- These can be for rear or front projection, depending on the needs of the show. In certain cases, a large sheet or some other material may be used to project upon,

although, this would usually be provided by the artist(s). Best is to clarify in advance, how you intend to hang the screen if a structure is not being provided. Most commercial screen rentals come with a stand.

- Projectors- There are many different types of projectors available today. The decision of where the projector will be hung will determine the "throw distance" required (i.e. the distance from the projector to the screen), which will inform how many lumens (i.e. level of brightness) will be required. In most cases, 1500- 2500 lumens will suffice. Usually the projector is connected via cables (e.g. s-video, VGA or DVI) to a laptop or DVD player, which provides the media for the video projections. Its best to ensure that you have all the right connectors in advance. Apple Mac computers may require a specialized adapter.

Set/ Staging Elements

- Cycs, Scrim & Drapes - These are used to dress a stage. Theatre drapes are typically black (or sometimes red) and can help create a neutral background or frame a stage to bring focus to a performance. Cycs (cycloramas) and scrim are hung at the back of a stage and used to shine lights or projections onto. When lit from the front, scrim appear as a solid piece of fabric. When lit from the rear they become semi transparent, creating a silhouette or hazy dream-like effect.
- Pipes - These are used for hanging all of the above.

Setting up before the event

Make sure you are providing all that has been requested / negotiated between the artist and yourself as presenter, according to the [technical rider](#). Depending on the complexity of the show you are producing, and your own technical experience, you should leave yourself several hours to set up the stage and equipment, the backdrops and decorations, the lighting system and the P.A. When this is finished and all the connections have been checked, invite your band or performers to test your set up with a sound check. Set your lights to make sure they illuminate the performers well. It is recommended that you finish all this work at least 30 minutes to 1 hour before your doors open to the public.

The technical rider

The Technical Rider or technical specifications (tech specs) is a document provided to the presenter by the artist or tour manager, which specifies the technical production requirements (e.g. playing area, lighting equipment, audio mixers, cables, microphones, staging, etc.) for a given show. This should be provided *before the contract is drawn up*, so that both artist and presenter have a common understanding of the show requirements, as well as whose responsibility it is to provide what equipment and/or production crew. It is important that this information be up to date and show specific.

The technical rider will outline the staging, lighting, sound, projection and personnel requirements, along with other needs such as dressing rooms, water, etc. It may include basic set elements such as a table, chairs, etc. It should also outline company information such as the show's running time and any crew members and equipment that the company will be providing. Here is an example of a [technical rider](#), from the Canada Arts Council Touring Handbook.

If there are special tech requirements (that necessitate specialized knowledge of operations) for a particular show, such as a follow spot, a gunshot, use of a fog machine, video projections, etc., these should be arranged in consultation with the artist(s) you have booked.

As a presenter, you are responsible for providing whatever technical elements have been agreed upon in the rider, as well as clarifying any technical needs that you are unsure of, in a timely manner, in the lead up to a show. If the show's technical needs outweigh your expertise, consider hiring a technician (or someone with a background in music/theatre production) to assist in renting the necessary equipment ahead of time and running the show on the day.

Further reading

[Best practices & guidelines](#) from the Canadian Institute for Theatre Technology.

FINANCES

Budget

Once you've decided to organize an event, you'll need to make a budget. To protect yourself from overspending, it's important to remain conservative in your budget. Always include all of your potential expenses while underestimating your revenues. For example, it's a good rule of thumb to budget only selling 60% of your tickets. For more information, please see our [sample event budget](#).

Earned Revenue

As a presenter, you want your event to be a great success. Not only should the audience enjoy the show, you should also hopefully cover your expenses. With any luck, you'll have also earned some extra cash to put towards another, equally successful, event in the future.

But where does the money come from?

Tickets

Ticket sales are the main source of revenue for most performances. Finding the right price for your tickets is very important. Should you charge too much, you may lose out on sales; if you charge too little, your show may be perceived as amateur. A good strategy to price your ticket is to observe what others are charging for similar performances.

If you anticipate there will be high demand for the show, you may consider adding a second performance. Although this will increase your overall costs, some fees will only increase marginally, and you should be able to offset this with the extra revenue generated. Alternatively, you could arrange for the artist to host a workshop or master class while they are visiting, these are referred to as [value-adding activities](#).

Sponsorships

Partnerships with local organizations can be very beneficial for community groups looking to organize an event. Don't get stuck in the belief that sponsorships must be a cash donation, get creative! Sponsors could donate all sorts of useful things that will decrease your costs, such as advertising, equipment, snacks or raffle items.

When approaching a business, be sure to come prepared with any information that could be important to them. These may include, but are not limited to, expected ticket sales, your target audience, the type of performance, and an explanation of how the business will

benefit from the sponsorship partnership (advertising in program, goodwill, etc).

Concessions/Merchandise/Raffle

If it is permitted by the venue, sales of snacks and other merchandise can be a good way to offset the cost of a performance. These can be especially lucrative if you can convince a local business to provide the snacks for little or no cost. Raffles are more complicated because they require a permit, but can nonetheless be a fun way to raise some extra revenue. Information on obtaining raffle permits is available from the [Regie des alcools, des courses et des jeux](#).

Grants

Applying for grants is a fantastic way to generate extra funds for your event. To find further resources on applying for grants, consult the Resources page on ELAN's website.

RESOURCES

Further resources, example documents, and other useful information is available on ELAN's website in the Resources section.