



**AACTFest  
2019 Handbook  
Festival Chair Guide**

American Association of Community Theatre

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**AACTFest 2019 Handbook**

Welcome to AACTFest 2019. The *AACTFest Handbook* helps you participate in AACT's festival program that celebrates the creativity of theatre across the nation.

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Copies of the *AACTFest 2019 Handbook* are available from the AACT office for a nominal fee or can be downloaded free from the AACT website at [aact.org/handbook](http://aact.org/handbook).

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
OF COMMUNITY THEATRE

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## **Overview**

The official name for the festival process is AACTFest. The first five (5) letters are capitalized and the last three (3) letters are lower case. The name is eight (8) continuous letters with no intervening spaces or punctuation marks. The AACT and AACTFest logos are available from the AACT office and website, and may be used by festivals in the AACTFest process.

AACT's primary festival focus is on the productions. The intent is that the AACTFest rules, guidelines, and decisions are made for the benefit of the entering companies.

The festival chair/hosts will determine specific awards apart from the rankings. A list of these awards will be provided to the Commissioner and the Adjudicators before the first performance.

Copies of the entire handbook or individual Guide sections can be downloaded at [aact.org/handbook](http://aact.org/handbook).

## **Festival Commissioner**

Festival Commissioners are assigned by the AACT Festivals Coordinator under authority of the Vice President for Festivals to provide assistance and serve as liaison between AACT and AACT festivals. (See Form F1)

The Commissioner is the official liaison between the state or regional festival and AACT. The Commissioner will:

- Initiate and maintain communication with the Festival Chair and Technical Chair through the festival process, providing assistance as needed.
- Confirm the eligibility of the entering companies.
- Conduct the Production Meeting(s); attend rehearsals and performances.
- Conduct the adjudication orientation and assign adjudicator evaluations.
- Verify each production's time with the official festival timekeepers.
- Serve as the ballot tallying officer.
- Complete the final report.

In matters of dispute during the festival, the Commissioner makes the final ruling. Any questions or discussion of disqualification is made through the Festival Commissioner.

The Commissioner shall not be affiliated with any competitive production entered in the festival to which s/he has been assigned.

Festival registration fees are waived for the Commissioner. The Festival Host may provide lodging as well, but this is not required.

## **House Policies**

The host theatre facility's house regulations will apply as pertains to smoking areas, food and beverage consumption, admission of children, etc.

The use of recording devices is not allowed during performances except those officially designated by the Festival Chair. The official photographer may not use any kind of flash or distracting light, and must be as unobtrusive as possible. If a performing group feels photography will be detrimental to their performance, the group may request an alternative solution from the Festival Chair or Festival Commissioner. Performing companies may record the adjudications of their respective performances.

The house must be closed during the performance, but must remain open during set-up and strike. Anyone who leaves during the performance may not return until the performance has ended.

## **Facilities**

The Festival Chair and host must provide a proper theatre facility unless granted exception by the AACT Vice President for Festivals. The stage of the theatre is required to be in working order and fitted to mount productions.

All theatre facilities must be accessible without restriction to the Festival Chair, Festival Commissioner, and appropriate AACT staff at all times during the run of the festival including during the performances. The facilities may include (but are not limited to) backstage, dressing rooms, light, sound, and other control booths.

Safety procedures and reasonable policies of the host theatre are to be followed at all times.

## **Technical Information**

Detailed technical information is contained in the *AACTFest 2019 Handbook*, The Basics, Technical Specifications.

## **Personnel**

Each festival, at all levels, must have a designated technical director, host stage manager, two timekeepers (one backstage and one in the house), equipment operator(s), and such other personnel as necessary to keep the festival moving in a timely order. While light and sound operation by performing groups is at the host's option, there must be someone capable of running the equipment, if necessary, present at all rehearsals and performances.

## Company Packets

The Chair will distribute to all entering companies a packet giving all times, dates, places, and other information. An electronic version of the packet - accessible online to all entering companies is allowed. The packet should include:

- The deadline for sending all materials required by the AACTFest 2019 Handbook.
- Names with addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers of Festival Chair and Technical Director.
- Tentative schedule, to be updated when number of entries is known.
- Registration information for the festival.
- Hotel information.
- Floor plan of the theatre and stage ground plan.
- Theatre technical specifications.
- Light and sound plots and other technical information such as fly ability, soft goods plan, on-deck and storage area details, etc.
- Accessibility issues of the facility and provisions to request access assistance. Notice of ASL interpretation or captioning, if provided.
- Maps and city information.

Regional packets with the aforementioned information should be prepared by the Regional Festival Chair and sent to the chairs of the state festivals within the region. The packets must be received by the State Chair at least 20 days prior to each state's festival. (Exceptions may be granted by the AACT VP for Festivals.) The State Festival Chair will deliver the regional packet to the company (or companies) whose productions have been selected to proceed.

## Company Documents

At each level, every company must provide several documents to the festival chair before the festival begins. The Festival Chair should provide companies a deadline for the required material. See the *AACTFest 2019 Handbook*, The Basics, Entry Requirements for details. After the festival, the Festival Commissioner will collect the documents and scripts of the advancing companies and assure their transfer to the next level festival's chair.

## Production Meeting

A production meeting (15-30 minutes) must be held separately with the company's members, including cast, crew, musicians, etc., prior to the company's rehearsal time. The session must be held in the theatre and should include a tour of the facility. The Festival Commissioner will conduct the meeting in conjunction with the Host Technical Director and Host Stage Manager.

Each facility and festival is unique, and as such, adaptations may be necessary for local conditions. Most items covered in the production meeting are a reiteration of information supplied by the individual companies on the technical questionnaire. (See Form F3)

## Technical Rehearsal

The festival schedule shall include an 80-minute slot per competing company at some time prior to their performance time and after the production meeting has taken place. This is not required for showcases. The Commissioner will supervise the technical rehearsal restricted to the company members, Festival Chair, Commissioner, house technical/stage crew, and appropriate AACT staff present at the festival.

## Adjudicators

Care should be taken in adjudicator selection. Adjudicators must possess a wide range of theatrical training and experience, and the skills to provide constructive feedback in a supportive manner.

It is the responsibility of the host to research and determine the validity and appropriateness of prospective adjudicators. The quality of the festival experience will increase if adjudicator choices are based on careful research. The chair is urged to seek assistance from the Vice President for Festivals or appropriate AACT staff. Adjudicator evaluations will be provided online upon request. If a festival host has a production entered in the festival, the task of selecting prospective adjudicators must be performed by someone other than the host; that person must not be affiliated with an entered production or personally connected with the host theatre. Once prospective adjudicators have been selected, they are submitted for approval by the VP for Festivals. AACT VP for Festivals must approve all adjudicators used at any level of the AACTFest cycle. The AACT office must be notified of the festival adjudicator selection or sent a copy of Form C2.

The national adjudicators, the Vice President for Festivals, and the Festival Commission Chair are allowed to adjudicate a maximum of two state festivals during the cycle. They may not adjudicate at the regional level.

Prospective adjudicators at all levels should be sent the *AACTFest 2019 Handbook*, Adjudication Guide with the contract. A prospective adjudicator who has reservations about any of the responsibilities or guidelines should not be utilized. It is strongly suggested adjudicators sign a contract stating what is expected of them and what they should expect in return. See Form C3 for a sample contract.

Each adjudicator should be provided with travel, local transportation, hotel accommodations, food (in the form of direct purchase, reimbursement, or per diem), admission to all festival social events, and a local host. In the interest of acquiring highly qualified adjudicators, an honorarium is strongly recommended.

The Festival Commissioner will conduct an orientation session with the adjudicators. A maximum of one hour should be scheduled for the session with attendance limited to the adjudicators, adjudicator hosts, Festival Chair, Festival Co-Chair or Assistant, Technical Director (or designee), Festival Stage Manager, timekeepers, and appropriate AACT staff present at the festival.

Adjudicators are required to use a microphone and must be lighted when presenting their comments.

It is strongly recommended that the festival schedule include time, following the awards presentation, for adjudicators to meet one-on-one with the directors of advancing companies.