

# A Guide for Hosting AACTFest



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# Introduction

Occasionally you may ask, or be asked, to host an AACTFest. What's that? Why would you want to do it? How do you do it? The following material will help you decide whether or not to host a festival and offer guidance on various successful ways to accomplish it.

This guide has nothing to do with the rules or procedures of AACTFest. For questions or help in those areas, please see the *AACTFest Handbook*. Although there may be some overlap of material, the *Handbook* is the final authority. Likewise, if you're looking for help in mounting a production for a festival, it's best to start with the Resource Roster in the *AACT Directory* or on the website at [www.aact.org](http://www.aact.org).

AACTFest is the biennial festival of plays sponsored or endorsed by the American Association of Community Theatre (AACT). The two-year cycle begins as early as July in any odd-numbered year and culminates with the National AACTFest in June of the next odd-numbered year.

AACT has identified ten Regions encompassing all 50 states, possessions, and military installations outside of the continental U. S. All community theatres holding a current AACT membership are eligible to participate. Ideally, each state and possession would hold a festival. At least two participating companies make a festival; a number of states have as many as 25 participants. Each production is publicly adjudicated by up to three adjudicators. The production(s) selected to proceed then perform at one of the ten Regional festivals, in front of three other adjudicators. The 12 productions selected to proceed from the ten Regions (Region IV, comprised of 10 states and 2 possessions, is allowed two productions, plus one production is selected at large) then perform at the national AACTFest.

The national festival has occurred every two years since 1969; in its current format and as AACTFest, since 1987. It is a unique opportunity for companies, individual participants, and observers to learn, teach, improve, impress, network, and fraternize. It can be very serious and very seriously fun!



# Chapter 1

## Hosting Preliminaries

### Who Decides

If a state or regional association exists, it is typically that group who determines which theatre or city will host a festival. There are many different methods used and no one of them stands out as the best. In some cases, especially those areas without associations, it's simply: the theatre that asks first gets to host. Other methods used include lotteries and formal presentations. Occasionally, a festival needs to be assigned to a willing site. Sometimes, unfortunately, a state doesn't have a festival. One of the goals of this guide is to take the mystery and fear out of festival hosting so that doesn't happen again.

### Applying to Host

Contact the AACT office to determine if your state or region has an association. If so, contact them and ask how to apply to host the next festival. If not, contact the State Contact for your area as listed in the *AACT Membership & Resource Directory* and ask him/her. Key considerations in choosing a host include:

- 👂 Historical/anticipated attendance and size of house
- 👂 Availability & condition of technical components (lights, audio devices, etc.)
- 👂 Ease of access (highways, air service, etc.)
- 👂 Volunteer base
- 👂 Board & community support
- 👂 Where recent festivals have been

Festivals that typically have 20+ participating companies and hundreds of attendees won't fit in a 50-seat black box. The site needs to meet the festival's needs.

Although you may have seen good theatre in a barn with 150 watt PAR's in coffee cans, a festival needs a real working facility. It doesn't have to be state-of-the-art, but it needs to be in good condition.

You don't need an airport or Interstate, but a Federal or State highway is much better than, "Go seven miles that way on the gravel road, then turn right at the broken windmill."

Yes, a half dozen people can produce quality theatre, but they'd get worn out attempting to host a festival. You'll need two dozen volunteers (minimum) for a small festival, possibly a hundred for a large one.

If your board doesn't support hosting a festival, find something else to do. It's as simple as that. If your community doesn't support it, find a way, a hook, to get them involved so they do support it. Most smaller communities that are supportive of the theatre are supportive of a festival.

It's common at all levels (State, Regional, National) to vary the location geographically each cycle to lessen the burden of travel and spread the wealth. Wealth??? Yes. In addition to a rejuvenating, fun and inspiring event, festival hosting can make your organization some money. [\[See Budgeting section.\]](#)

Some states have deadlines for application and many are planning two to four years in advance so find out early what requirements need to be met.

## Making the Decision

The decision to host should not be made lightly. After considering any requirements or suggestions from any local, state, or regional association, you should seriously consider your organization's ability to put it together. Do you have:

- enough volunteers?
- enough time?
- the space?
- the desire?
- the money?

Successful festivals require people; a bunch of them. Plan on the following at a bare minimum and increase the number based on expected participation and attendance:

Core (planning) committee:	6 to 8
Theatre liaisons:	1 per participating company
Timers:	2
Adjudicator hosts	1 (or 1 per adjudicator)
Technical staff	2 to 4
Ushers	2 to 4
Registration desk	2 to 4
Refreshments	2 to 4
Signage/Decorations	2 to 4

There are a number of other potential volunteer needs such as transportation, clean-up, parties, etc. The bigger your festival, the greater your need.

Regarding time, you'll need 1 to 5 days for the festival depending on participants, at least a week to ten days to prepare the facility, several weeks to advertise, and a good six to twelve months in preparation. A timeline is included later for your reference.

Space requirements depend largely on the number of participants. Ideally you will have 100 sq. ft. immediately adjacent to the stage for "on deck" area and 100 sq. ft. for each of the companies for on-site storage. A room close to the stage should be available for the adjudicators to compose their thoughts. Plan on additional needs if you have any workshops, souvenirs, parties, or meals. The entire event doesn't need to be in the same space, of course. Many successful festivals utilize two or more facilities for the various aspects of the event.

As with most endeavors, it comes down to your level of commitment. If you and your theatre group have the desire to make it successful, you will!

A festival doesn't have to be expensive. Ideally, the income you receive from participants, attendees, and souvenirs will more than offset what you pay out. Even so, you'll often need to pay some expenses before you realize any income. Expenses can include:

- adjudicators' honorariums or stipends
- adjudicators' travel and lodging
- food and drinks
- souvenirs
- marketing materials
- postage
- advertising
- nametags & registration packets

Some festivals have budgets in the hundreds of dollars; some in the thousands. There have been successful AND unsuccessful festivals at both ends of the spectrum. Some specifics are noted in the Budgeting chapter but you must begin with the knowledge that you can either make or lose money. Following the points in this guide won't guarantee your success but will certainly enhance

your chances of being successful.

At this point you've hopefully given it enough thought to make an informed decision. So, to host or not to host? The contributors to this guide have attended hundreds of festivals all over the country and many parts of the world. Among the hundreds of sites and thousands of productions, some are good and some not so good, but they all have one thing in common: a good time! Festivals are a microcosm of community theatre. Where else can one interact with so many different people, all of whom share the same goal--producing quality theatre? Few, if any, other avocations provide all that theatre does.

Another thing, the majority of hosts want to do it again and again. If you're so inclined, read on.



# Chapter 2

## Planning . . .


A well-planned festival is a successful festival. Mistakes will happen and snafus will occur but such minor problems will be transparent to the the audience.


### . . . to Apply


This planning needs to begin as soon as you've decided you want to host. Be sure to meet your Association's deadline for application. If no deadline exists, make this application at least 14 months prior to the anticipated festival. Most festivals occur around the same time each cycle and usually have a three or four week "window" in which they can be held. Pick open dates at your facility within that time frame and include them with your application/proposal. If it's impossible to work a festival into your production schedule, submit alternate dates. The association may be willing to switch. Most of these dates, by the way, stay the same "because we've always done it then," not necessarily a good reason. Make your application as complete as you possibly can and always include a proposed budget, proof of board and volunteer support, and a general layout of the facility, including technical capabilities.

When you've received confirmation that you are hosting, follow the timeline.

### . . . twelve months out

 Form your core Festival Committee. This group is responsible for all the planning and it works out best if your various "Chairs" are drawn from this group. For example: Adjudication, Registration, Entertainment, Meals, etc. The bulk of this group's work occurs before the festival. Determine the various chairs and make assignments to be completed for your next meeting in three months. The core committee should probably be no more than eight or ten people. If you choose responsible volunteers and delegate, your job as Festival Chair will be much more enjoyable. Each committee member should read the *AACTFest Handbook*. Update your budget.

 Find your adjudicators. You need at least one, but three will be better. Some states use only two. That may be understandable because of cost but if they are equally stubborn and disagree on placement, it could be a long night waiting for the results. Stick with an odd number if you can. Good adjudicators are often booked at least a year in advance so make this a priority. For assistance in finding adjudicators contact the AACT Adjudication Chair. You may choose to bring in experts from different parts of the country but many good adjudicators can be found closer to home. Remember that adjudicators need to understand community theatre but occasionally local colleges & high schools or theatres in larger cities close to you may be a resource. If you have more than one adjudicator, it typically works best if at least one is from out of your immediate area, preferably from a different state. It's also wise to choose adjudicators from different backgrounds, i.e. one whose forte is directing; another acting; another from academia. Be sure you have them sign a contract. A sample contract can be found in the *AACTFest Handbook* as Appendix I. Your adjudicator(s) should receive an honorarium and must have all travel & lodging expenses paid. If you can pay more when the time comes, great! Note: Regional festivals must have three adjudicators, one of whom needs to be from outside the region.

 Find hotel(s). Work with one or more hotels and reserve a block of rooms for the festival. Most hotels will discount these rates through a certain date. If you have a large enough hotel for everyone, it's often best to work with only that one for the best rates. If you are using the hotel for meals or parties, get a quote on those rates as well. Specific "head counts" usually don't have to be known until a few days before the event. The number of rooms may equate to credit for comp rooms for the adjudicators, festival representatives, or others.

👉 Find restaurant/caterer. If you will be providing any food, make initial arrangements now with either a restaurant or caterer and get preliminary prices.

👉 Initial Mailing. Inform all the theatres in your state (region) that you are hosting the next festival and urge them to participate. This can be a simple postcard with dates, a note that more detailed information will be coming, and contact information. Put the info on your web site as well.

## ... nine months out

👉 Committee meeting. Have each separate chair review what has been accomplished thus far. Confirm that things are being done. It's better to address problems as early as possible if committee people are not performing. Continue to closely check your budget and update as necessary with current information.

👉 Sponsors. Look for sponsors, corporate and individual, to help support/underwrite portions of your festival. If a business doesn't want to give you money, perhaps they'd supply you with logo items for a registration packet. Items such as plastic bags, pencils, pens, magnets, note pads, etc. will be appreciated in a "goodie bag" for all registrants. If the company has no suitable logo items, perhaps they'd donate a prize you could raffle during the festival. If you choose to raffle, be aware that some locales require a permit. Check with your city.

👉 Determine basic price structure. Although your prices may need to change based on the number of entries you ultimately have, you should be able to establish a basic price at this time. You know facility costs, meal costs, party costs, and some incidental costs so determine your base price now. You may keep updating it until you send out the official registration forms in six months.

👉 Auction items. A number of festivals have had success with silent auctions. Now is the time to start gathering items for this. Companies will often donate items for this purpose. In addition to local companies, be sure to ask play publishers and theatrical suppliers for items.

## ... six months out

👉 Committee meeting. Once again, have each separate chair review what has been accomplished thus far. Confirm that things are being done. It's better to address problems as early as possible if committee people are not performing. Continue to closely check your budget and update as necessary with current information.

👉 Invitation/Application mailing. Invite theatres to participate and include applications. Include all the following in the mailing:

Festival dates


AACT Guidelines ([Section 5.04 of Handbook](#))


Entry fee amount


Deadline for application


👉 Begin preparing technical specifications for the theatre space. At the three month point you'll need to send tech specs to all entering theatres. Get started on them now if you haven't done so already. You'll need all stage dimensions; door dimensions to enter building and stage areas; light capabilities including wattage available, board manufacturer and model, number of available dimmers, type of plugs used, available floor pockets, stage lighting plot, etc.; sound capabilities including source decks available, microphones available and mic options, speakers used, additional speakers available, fly systems, traps, etc.; space available in both the "on deck" area (if not the standard 10' x 10') and other storage; directions to theatre plus address, phone numbers, and e-mail; contact information for festival chair and technical director; and any other information you think would be helpful for a cast and crew's first visit to your space. In general, just follow the *AACTFest Handbook*.

## **. . . three months out**


 Committee meeting. Once again, have each separate chair review what has been accomplished thus far. Confirm that things are being done. It's better to address problems as early as possible if committee people are not performing. Continue to closely check your budget and update as necessary with current information.


 Go over the technical specs and prepare to send out the final mailing to the participating companies. This mailing should include all the information you know including: order of performance, performance day and time, rehearsal day and time, all performing companies and pieces, adjudicators' names, final price structure and registration forms, all the technical information you have prepared, request for technical information and needs, and request for scripts. See **“Final Mailing” checklist (Page 17)**. Also send all scheduling, hotel, and adjudicator information to the Festival Commission Representative at this time.

 Determine order of performance. This is normally done by lot and often determined by either the board of directors or the festival committee. Exceptions may be made but don't do anything for one group that you wouldn't do for any other group. (This is done much earlier for regional festivals.)


 Send out the final mailing to all participating companies. This needs to go out as soon as possible since you'll be requesting information you need as early as possible (scripts & tech information).

## **. . . two months out**


 Committee meeting. In addition to the normal review, make final preparations regarding schedule, meals and or parties, volunteer assignments, etc. These things may have to be tweaked later but you can determine the basics at this point.


 Layout program with info received from companies. Try to include cast pictures if possible since this helps adjudicators identify people for awards.


## **. . . six weeks out**

 Mail scripts to adjudicators. If you have a large number of shows, you may wish to begin sending scripts as soon as you begin receiving them. If there are just a few shows, send them all together. In any case, give your adjudicators enough time to read them all before the festival. Check to be sure that these scripts show cuttings as the piece will be produced! Don't forget to also send copies to the Festival Commission Representative.


## **. . . four weeks out**


 Committee meeting. Do the usual stuff and begin in earnest your “troubleshooting” phase. If you've followed the guidelines thus far, troubleshooting is about all that's left. . .that and enjoying the festival.

 Follow up with vendors. Contact the hotel(s) and confirm reservations and available space. Contact caterer(s) and confirm meal selection and give them an updated head count. Contact entertainer(s) and confirm plans. Contact trophy shop or other awards vendor to order trophies/plaques, etc. Be sure printer is on track for your program.


 Follow up with volunteers. Be sure your volunteers are prepared in the various areas. Plan and conduct training sessions if necessary.

 Follow up with adjudicators. Confirm that they have received the scripts and know their itineraries.

 Clean up. Determine clean-up needs and make sure the facility is at its best. You'll soon have visitors from out of town and you want their lasting impression to be a good one.

 Advertise. Begin advertising as much as you can afford. A large local audience is beneficial in many ways: It helps to educate them to the festival process and may get new supporters for your programs; it increases your box office receipts; it makes it more enjoyable for the companies to play to larger houses; and if you have an entry yourself, it gives you excellent moral support. Advertise, if you can, through the beginning of the festival.

## **. . . two weeks out**

 Committee meeting. Make sure everything that has been assigned and planned has been carried out to satisfaction. Make specific committee member assignments for festival week if this hasn't been done already.

 Continued follow-ups. If the four week follow-ups weren't satisfactory, follow-up again and check until completed as you wish.

## **. . . one week out**

 Committee meeting. Follow the [Festival Week Checklist \(Page 17\)](#) and confirm that all duties have been performed to your satisfaction and enjoy the festival!

# Chapter 3

## Budgeting . . .

Budgeting for festivals scares a number of people but it's not rocket science. Further, if your steering committee keeps its collective eye on it and revisits it at each meeting, you can tweak it, within reason, as circumstances change during the planning phase. Of course, you need to keep your board in the loop and make sure they approve of any changes. Below is a sample budget used for a state festival, specifically, Iowa. As you go through the line items be aware of various geographic and facility differences. Larger states, for example, will require overnight stays and additional meals, regardless of who pays for them since commuting isn't an option. Most New England participants, however will be able to commute if they wish. Similarly, if you own your own space and have sufficient room for meals and parties, you'll be able to cater in some things and your budget will reflect those items. Following the sample budget is a list of other line items you may need to consider.

### Income

Door admissions	\$ 400.00	40 @ \$10.00; admits for plays only, no meals
Packages	\$ 9,000.00	100 @ \$90; includes all plays, meals, and parties
Packages	\$ 2,000.00	20 @ \$100; as above but after deadline
Grants	\$ 1,500.00	Specifically to offset adjudicator expense
Sponsorships	\$ 1,000.00	Party sponsor
Souvenir sales	\$ 468.00	72 @ 6.50; t-shirts
Silent auction	\$ 750.00	Hard to budget but with a lot of items, this is low
	<u>\$ 15,118.00</u>	

### Expenses

Adjudicator travel	\$ 850.00	1 airline ticket and 2 driving
Adjudicator lodging	\$ 720.00	9 nights @ \$80/night
Adjudicator meals	\$ 200.00	6 festival meals plus extra
Adjudicator stipend	\$ 600.00	\$200 each
Mailing postage	\$ 300.00	2 mailings to state membership & theatres
Printing	\$ 450.00	Programs
Meals	\$ 5,850.00	Est. of 130 people @ \$45 (2 lunch, 3 dinner, 1 brunch)
Parties	\$ 600.00	3 parties with meat/cheese trays
Awards	\$ 125.00	Plaque, trophies, & certificates
Nametags	\$ 90.00	Lanyard nametags
Souvenirs	\$ 252.00	72 shirts @ \$3.50 each
	<u>\$ 10,037.00</u>	
	\$ 5,081.00	Gross profit

The preceding example is an actual budget. Not included are several staff people who most likely would have been working anyway. The bulk of the “people” support came from volunteers (about 100). Volunteers were not charged to view the shows and were given meals at cost. Likewise, no bar expense or income was included since it was basically an in/out situation and incurred no additional expense. As you can see, a theatre can make money from hosting although it’s not guaranteed. Many things and situations can affect any given outcome, including:

- Facility rental
- Union technicians
- Extremely low participation (The example budget had ten companies participating)
- Extremely low attendance (More typical with “commuter” festivals)
- High catering, awards, printing, etc. charges
- Low souvenir sales
- No grant/sponsor support

Candidly, most theatres don’t enter into this with the intent of making money; they simply want to break even. However, the more you offer, the more you can charge and therefore reasonably expect to recoup. If you’re considering your very first festival, it may be better to start small and gradually increase over the years. For example, a first, small festival could utilize one local adjudicator instead of three from out of the area.

Silent auctions tend to start small but grow over the years. This is an excellent way to increase revenue since all items are donated and exclusive or good items can generate quite a bit of both interest and money. Ask local businesses to donate as well as publishing companies (scripts, posters, etc.).

If you don’t have a facility for meals on site, you may offer snacks or prepared sandwiches in between shows or blocks of shows. This is particularly effective for commuter festivals.

# Chapter 4

## Miscellaneous . . .

### Final Mailing Checklist

- Registration form(s)
- Stage plot
- House plot
- Technical specifications
- Map & directions to theatre
- AACTFest Entry/Information Form (Form “B” in Handbook)
- AACTFest Technical Information Form (Form “C” in Handbook)
- AACTFest Affidavit of Actor Eligibility Form (Form “D” in Handbook)
- AACTFest Warranty of Company Compliance Form (Form “E” in Handbook)
- Request for scripts *as cut* (one for each adjudicator + one for audio describer/Commission rep)
- Request for all rights to perform
- Schedule of festivities
- Rehearsal schedule
- List of participating companies and productions
- List of adjudicators
- Letter of thanks for participating & welcome. Include deadline for return of forms and all contact information. Should be sent no later than 30 days prior to festival

### Festival Week Checklist

- All volunteers lined up
- All vendors lined up and double checked
- Adjudicators confirmed (including travel & lodging)
- All areas cleaned
- All lighting & sound equipment in good working order
- Holding & on-deck areas marked
- Colored spike tape on hand
- Timer & adjudicator supplies on hand (stopwatches, clipboards, pens, lights, etc.)
- Prepare name badges, programs and any “goodie” bags you will be handing out
- Prepare silent auction items
- Any other items specific to your festival

# Sample Schedule\*

## Thursday, March 6

11:00 - 12:00	Adjudicator Orientation
12:00 - 12:10	Technical Meeting, <b>Theatre 1</b>
12:10 - 1:30	Rehearsal, <b>Theatre 1</b>
1:30 - 1:40	Technical Meeting, <b>Theatre 2</b>
1:40 - 3:00	Rehearsal, <b>Theatre 2</b>
3:00 - 3:10	Technical Meeting, <b>Theatre 3</b>
3:10 - 4:30	Rehearsal, <b>Theatre 3</b>
4:30 - 4:40	Technical Meeting, <b>Theatre 4</b>
4:40 - 5:00	Rehearsal, <b>Theatre 4</b>
5:00 - 6:20	Dinner Break
6:20 - 6:40	Opening Ceremonies
6:40 - 8:30	Performance 1-- <b>Theatre 2</b> , <i>Title</i>
8:30 - 8:40	Break
8:40 - 10:40	Performance 2-- <b>Theatre 3</b> , <i>Title</i>
10:40 - 2:00	Party 1

## Friday, March 7

8:10 - 8:20	Technical Meeting, <b>Theatre 5</b>
8:20 - 9:40	Rehearsal, <b>Theatre 5</b>
9:40 - 9:50	Technical Meeting, <b>Theatre 6</b>
9:50 - 11:10	Rehearsal, <b>Theatre 6</b>
11:10 - 11:20	Technical Meeting, <b>Theatre 7</b>
11:20 - 12:40	Rehearsal, <b>Theatre 7</b>
11:40 - 12:50	Lunch Break
12:50 - 2:50	Performance 3-- <b>Theatre 1</b> , <i>Title</i>
2:50 - 3:00	Break
3:00 - 5:00	Performance 4-- <b>Theatre 4</b> , <i>Title</i>
5:00 - 6:40	Dinner Break
6:40 - 8:30	Performance 5-- <b>Theatre 5</b> , <i>Title</i>
8:30 - 8:40	Break
8:40 - 10:30	Performance 6-- <b>Theatre 6</b> , <i>Title</i>
10:40 - 2:00	Party 2

## Saturday, March 8

8:10 - 8:20	Technical Meeting, <b>Theatre 8</b>
8:20 - 9:40	Rehearsal, <b>Theatre 8</b>
9:40 - 9:50	Technical Meeting, <b>Theatre 9</b>
9:50 - 11:10	Rehearsal, <b>Theatre 9</b>
11:10 - 11:20	Technical Meeting, <b>Theatre 10</b>
11:20 - 12:40	Rehearsal, <b>Theatre 10</b>
11:40 - 12:50	Lunch Break
12:50 - 2:50	Performance 7-- <b>Theatre 10</b> , <i>Title</i>
2:50 - 3:00	Break
3:00 - 5:00	Performance 8-- <b>Theatre 9</b> , <i>Title</i>
5:00 - 6:40	Dinner Break
6:40 - 8:30	Performance 9-- <b>Theatre 7</b> , <i>Title</i>
8:30 - 8:40	Break
8:40 - 10:30	Performance 10-- <b>Theatre 8</b> , <i>Title</i>
10:40 - 2:00	Party 3 ( <i>Feel free to dress up for this one; other parties are casual</i> )

## Sunday, March 9

10:00 - 11:20	Brunch
11:20 - 12:00	Awards

**Workshops (titles to be announced) will be held Friday and Saturday mornings at 8:00, 9:15, and 10:30. Friday workshops will be repeated on Saturday.**

**ALL PERFORMANCES, WORKSHOPS, MEALS, AND PARTIES WILL BE HELD AT THE THEATRE**

**THEATRES MAY LOAD IN ANYTIME BETWEEN 8 AM & 4 PM ON THURSDAY AND BETWEEN 7 AM & 11 AM ON EITHER FRIDAY OR SATURDAY**

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*In addition to this format, a graphical copy in an application such as Microsoft Outlook® is handy to have. See Page 20.*

*You'll need to hold a tech meeting with each company prior to their rehearsal. Ten minutes should be sufficient for introductions, going over rules and logistics, and answering questions.*

\*Refer to schedule notes on next page.

## Schedule Notes

The preceding schedule is set up for ten productions, their rehearsals, three workshops, and meals in a little over three days. According to the Handbook, theatres are allowed 80 minutes each for both rehearsal and performance (including set-up and strike). If you as host allow 90 minutes for rehearsal (including a ten minute break every 80 minutes) you can fit eight rehearsals in a twelve hour day. Similarly, if you allow two hours for each performance (including set-up, strike, adjudication, and break) you easily fit six performances in a twelve hour day. Add two hours for meals and you have a workable 14 hour day (IE. 8:00AM - 10:00 PM) with time left over for a party or awards.

When determining the schedule, one of the first things to consider is what you want to accomplish with the festival. Obviously, one of the main objectives is to select a production to proceed to the next level. If that is your **ONLY** reason for the festival, you can cram everything into as short a time as possible while still adhering to the rules. If you want to encourage networking and education (usually a good idea) schedule an extra day so you can offer workshops and get-togethers. Especially if people have to travel any distance for the festival, make it worth their while. Of course, if you only have two or three participants, you can add all the extras and still do it in a day.

The “draw” for performance slots is done at random. After that is done, rehearsals are done in the same general order with two exceptions: 1. If the host theatre is a participant, it’s usually easier to have them rehearse first to allow more time for those companies coming from out-of-town; 2. It’s often helpful to the company travelling the farthest to rehearse last (or as late as possible prior to their performance) regardless of the draw.

Unless it’s necessary to schedule the awards the same day as the last production, consider having it the next morning for two reasons: 1. It gives the adjudicators sufficient time to determine awards; and 2. It offers participants an opportunity to network and let their “hair” down a bit before the closing event.

It should also be noted in the preceding schedule that specific starting times are listed for each production. The Handbook suggests that productions be in blocks of two and that the second production be ready to start as soon as adjudication is completed for the first production. This is a suggestion only and some festivals stick to it religiously.

# Sample Graphic Schedule

2003 IA/ND/SD AACT/Fest

## March 06, 2003

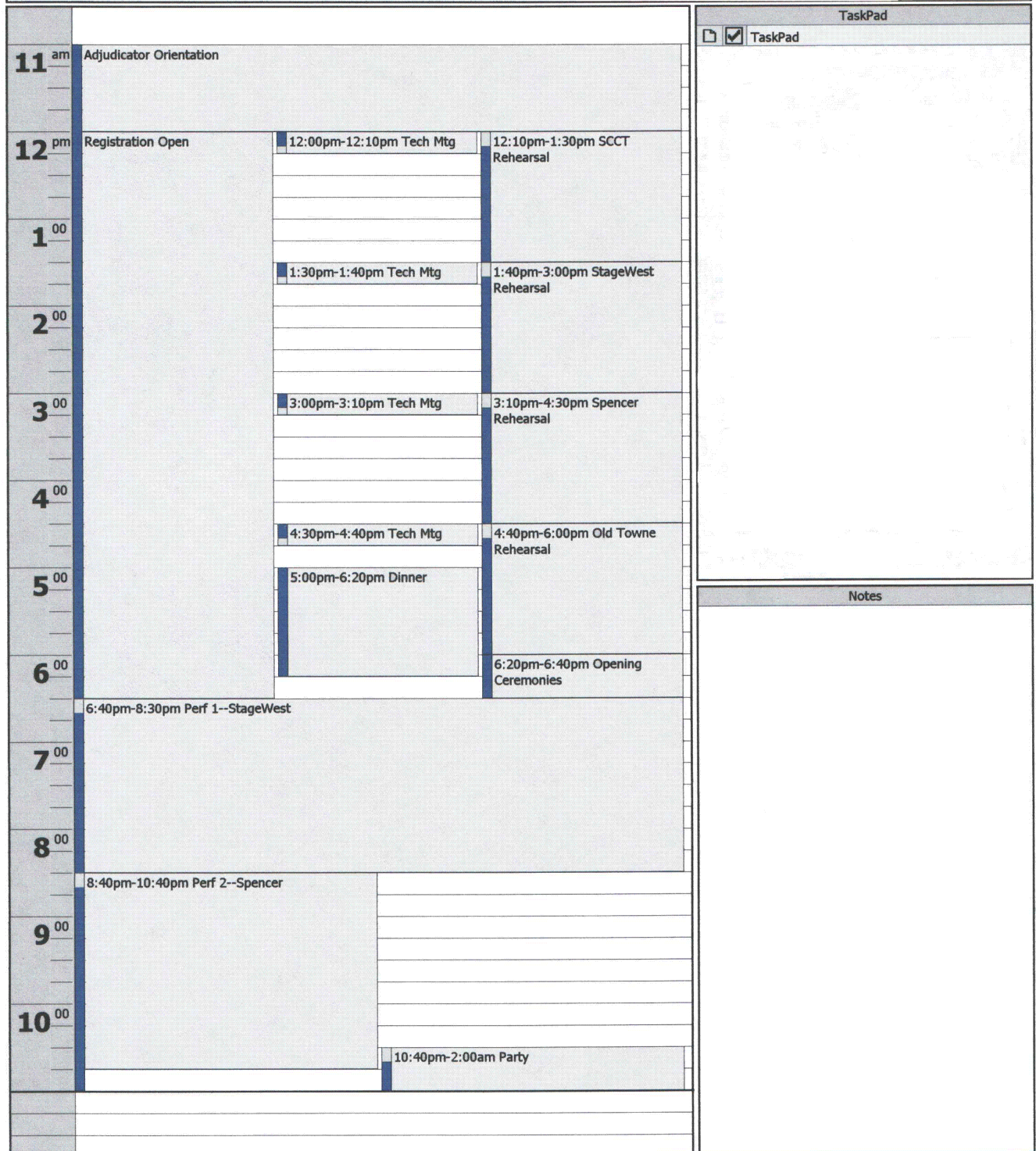
Thursday

March 2003

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

April 2003

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



TaskPad

TaskPad

Notes

## Sample Awards

Whatever awards you choose to present will often be determined by previous festivals. Some states have no individual awards; some have unlimited awards; and most are in between. Some states have an “All-Star Cast” award as opposed to awards for actor, actress, etc. In any case, tell your adjudicators at the orientation meeting what awards you’d like them to determine and/or present. Some states ask the adjudicators to make the presentations and others have the festival chair or other staff do it. There’s no right or wrong way, except: awards should indicate “Excellence in...,” “Outstanding performance (contribution, etc.)”, or some other general term as opposed to “Best...” As subjective as theatre is, it’s the opinion of the adjudicators that Sally excelled in her performance. That alone does not make her the best actress.

Common awards include:

Outstanding Performance by an Actor or Actress

Outstanding Set Design

Outstanding Costume Design

Outstanding Lighting Design

Outstanding Sound Design

Outstanding Makeup Design

Outstanding Hair Design

Outstanding Ensemble Performance

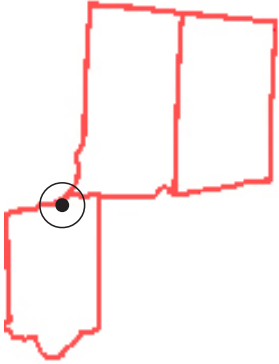
Outstanding Direction

Outstanding Choreography

Realize that if too many awards are given, it lessens the impact of those that are. In other words, if an award isn’t deserved, it shouldn’t be given.

# Sample Entry Form

This sample is a two-sided, tri-fold mailer, sent to prospective participants.



Come one, come all to one of the greatest theatre festivals in the country. It's right here at the Sioux City Community Theatre!

Theatres from Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota will meet in Sioux City in March, 2003, for the right to proceed to the regional festival held in Rochester, MN.

Look inside for more details and make plans to participate in this wonderful and exciting event. But hurry, the deadline for entry is December 2, 2002.



1401 Riverside Blvd.  
Sioux City, IA 51109

Place Label Here

*It's time to think Festival!*



the  
light  
within

2003 Iowa  
North Dakota  
South Dakota  
AACT/Fest  
March 6 - March 9, 2003  
Sioux City Community Theatre



# Three states...

Think of the fun and excitement! Three separate festivals all together. All production slots will be determined by lot but each states' entries will be adjudicated separately. It's the typically fun festival...times three! Be sure to enter so you can be a part of the fun.

The entry deadline is December 2.

Please fill out the mini entry form to the right and return it to the SCCCT to assure your place in the festival. Due to time and space restrictions, total number of companies is limited to 100 or 30, whichever comes first. The first 30 applications received will be chosen by lot for order of performance.

The entry fee guarantees your production a spot in the festival. It does not include any individual registrations, meals, or other festival opportunities. Individual registrations will be available on or about January 1, 2003.



# Three festivals...

Yes, our theatre intends to participate in the 2003 Iowa North Dakota South Dakota AACT/Fest.

AACT/Fest.

Theatre

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Contact

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Production

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Entry Fee: \$50.00

Please make checks payable to: SCCCT-Festival

Be sure to enter by the December 2, 2002 deadline.

Festival dates are March 6-9, 2003. If more than 20 theatres enter, festival will begin on March 5.



# One location...

Once again, the Sioux City Community Theatre is pleased to host the Iowa AACT/Fest. In addition to theatres from Iowa, we welcome those from both North Dakota and South Dakota.

The SCCCT has hosted a number of state festivals and three multi-state festivals. We feel we have the country's premiere site for festivals with a large stage, seating for over 300, a full service bar with seating for 250, considerable storage space, and 5 acres of parking.

Our festivals are great for actors, directors, technicians, and audience alike...both during the performances and after. It's one of the few festivals in the country that has everything on site. Except for your hotel, you never have to leave the theatre for food, drink, or fun! Be sure to sign your company up for this great event.

Individual registration packages will be available after January 1 and cost will depend on the number of entries. Remember, Region V rules allow states to send two companies to regional with ten or more participants at the state level. Both AACT and the SCCCT support a policy permitting the widest possible range of dramatic material to be performed in a festival of American Community Theatre.

**Sample Registration Form**  
This would be mailed to prospective attendees.

**Registration Form**

**2003 Iowa/North Dakota/South Dakota  
AACTFest  
at the  
Sioux City Community Theatre**



**Festival Package I**

*Includes ten performances, six meals, three parties*

Adults	\$90 through February 17, 2003	\$100 beginning February 18, 2003
Students	\$80 through February 17, 2003	\$ 90 beginning February 18, 2003

**Festival Package II**

*Includes ten performances and adjudications only*

Adults	\$50 through February 17, 2003	\$ 60 beginning February 18, 2003
Students	\$40 through February 17, 2003	\$ 50 beginning February 18, 2003

**Workshops will also be available at no extra charge!**

*A la Carte Meals and Parties Will Be Available For Purchase During The Festival*

**Cash Bar Available Daily 8 AM - 2 AM**

For More Information Contact SCCT at 712-233-2719

Sioux City Community Theatre located at 1401 Riverside Blvd., Sioux City, IA--Exit 151 off I-29

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Theatre \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Package \_\_\_\_\_ Cost \_\_\_\_\_ Totals \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: SCCT 2003 Festival Send to: SCCT, P. O. Box 512, Sioux City, IA 51102-0512

# Sample Name Tags

## Proven options for high visibility & information

Name tags have successfully been used for both identification and as admission to various events or functions. Instead of name tags and tickets, why not combine them and make it easier? The current preferred style of name tags is the lanyard type to avoid either pinholes in or adhesive residue on clothing. Many manufacturers, including Avery, NEBS, and Meco, offer various sizes of name badges and most popular word processing programs have mail merge capabilities that can be used for labels. Here is a sample name badge design:

**<<ACT Position>>** — This area can be highlighted and used for board members, special guests, etc.

**<<FIRST NAME>>** — First names should be easy to read from a distance.

**<<Last Name>>**

**<<Position>>**

**<<Theatre>>**

**<<City STATE>>**

**<<Your Logo>>**

**aact**  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
OF COMMUNITY THEATRE

Registration info should tell at a glance where the person is allowed to go.

Fest position could be participant, volunteer, adjudicator, whatever!

These areas may be graphics or additional fields for workshops, parties, or other.

**AAct VP Festivals**

**KATHIE**  
**Maldonado**

*Board Member*  
**Community Players of Hobbs**  
**Hobbs NM**

**Heart**  
**passion**

**aact**  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
OF COMMUNITY THEATRE

ALL EVENTS & AREAS

COMMISSION REP

Use of different colors makes it more interesting and visible.

# Festival FAQ's

## Answers to frequently asked questions

### **AACT:**

Why are there so many forms to fill out?

*There aren't that many! Those that exist will really make it easier for you and information from the forms allows AACT to make future festivals and Handbooks better (and provide information for such publications as this).*

This is our festival, not AACT's. Why do we have to follow your rules?

*First, there are very few inviolate rules: the 10/60/10 timing limits; the need to be all amateur; the need for adjudication; proof of legal permission to perform; and the requirement that all companies be treated equally. Every festival (AACT or not) would probably have the same or similar rules. Second, if your festival is in the AACT Cycle and intends to send a company to the AACT Regional or National festival, then AACT requires and has the right to expect all participants to conform to the same basic rules. If you have an off-cycle festival that does not feed into the AACT festival, you're free to use whatever rules you wish.*

What's this Festival Commission Representative and why does he/she have to come?

*The Festival Commission Rep is on site to give you any needed help, ensure that adjudicators are given all the correct information, ensure that balloting and tallying are done fairly, and ensure that all companies are treated equally. Further, a Commission Rep can make tough decisions impartially and without fear of reprisal since he/she is usually from out of state. Finally, if all state and regional festivals follow the same basic formula, each of the twelve companies knows what to expect at the National festival.*

Who pays for the Commission Rep?

*Commission Reps are volunteers and usually pay some of their own expenses. Because of that, AACT requires that festivals waive any registration fees to the Rep. Anything else the festival can do for the Rep is most appreciated such as obtaining a complimentary guest room.*

Does the festival have to be at a certain time of the year?

*As far as AACT is concerned, not really. The cycle actually begins the day after a National festival and continues through the next National festival. Theoretically, your state festival has a 21 to 22 month window. If you have a state or regional association, it may have rules regarding when festivals can be held. Festivals are usually held at certain times for either historical or weather related issues.*

### **Adjudicators:**

How much should adjudicators be paid?

*They perform a valuable service and should be paid accordingly within your budget. Honorariums typically range from \$100.00 to \$500.00 depending on the number of productions.*

Why should I have three adjudicators?

*It helps to have three from different disciplines (acting, directing, academia, etc.) so their comments are from different perspectives. In any case, you should have an odd number of adjudicators to break ties.*

Do the adjudicators need a host/hostess?

*Each one doesn't need one but the group should have one to help them find things, run errands for them, answer questions, give them rides, etc.*

Where can I find adjudicators?

*Call the Festival Commission Adjudicator Chair for assistance.*

Does AACT have an approved list of adjudicators?

*AACT maintains a list of adjudicators that have worked previous festivals. AACT also maintains comments from Adjudicator Evaluations submitted by previous festival hosts. These are comments from participants and audience members from festivals adjudicated by this person. It's your choice to accept them or not. AACT does not present them as an "approved" or "unapproved" list.*

## Miscellaneous:

I heard the piece produced has to come out of your regular season. Is that true?

*No. Some theatres use a piece from their season, some produce one they couldn't, or wouldn't, attempt in their regular season.*

Do we have to provide food or a party?

*No. Theatre people will find a way to eat and party with or without your help. However, it's a great opportunity for you to encourage networking and possibly make some money.*

We only have three theatres interested. Is that enough?

*Yes. Two theatres are enough and not all that uncommon.*

We'd like to host but I heard another theatre is interested too. Who gets to do it?

*State or regional associations usually determine which theatre will be the host. In the absence of an association it's often whichever theatre requests it first. AACT normally will not get involved with the decision unless requested to by the theatres.*

If I host, what will it cost?

*That all depends on the size of the festival, what you offer, how actively you promote it, and your adjudicator expense. Festivals can be done for several hundred dollars or ten thousand dollars. You can realize a profit of thousands of dollars or lose thousands. Follow the guidelines of this guide and ask questions from hosts of successful festivals and you should do fine.*

Who determines the entry fee and attendance prices?

*Unless you have a state or regional association that determines the prices, it's all up to you. In general, keep it fair and price it according to what you are offering. A \$50 - \$60 entry fee is not uncommon. Registration for a three show festival may cost \$25; a ten show festival may be \$100. As a base, figure \$5.00 per show and add \$\$ for any extras you provide (meals, parties, workshops, etc.).*

## Theatre Facility:

We don't have a fly system. Can we still host a festival?

*You may. It is important, however, to make all potential participants aware of the fact at the earliest possible time.*

We only have a hundred seats. Is that enough?

*Probably. Unless your state's festival historically has well over 100 attendees, you'll probably be safe. Even so, it may be a "first come, first served" basis which would encourage early registration. Also, a closed circuit video feed may be utilized.*

We don't have enough room for 10' x 10' spaces. What do we do?

*You should be able to find at least one 10' x 10' space, even if it's outside. It may be a logistical problem, but as long as each company is treated the same go for it. If all you can do is 9' x 9' and all companies live with it, proceed with that.*

Somebody wants to bring their own equipment. Can they?

*Sure, but talk to the Festival Commission Technical Chair for more information.*