

Great Exhibition Road Festival 2025

Freelance Festival programme coordinators - 2x roles Job brief

Number of roles: 2

Proposed period of contract: Monday 2 December 2024 – Friday 20 June 2025

Brief: To curate, creatively input into, and project manage the production of Festival zones at the 2025 Great Exhibition Road Festival.

Total days contracted (excluding Imperial College closure over Christmas): 85 days per role. This averages to roughly 3 days a week of work across the 6-month period, excluding the week leading up to the festival weekend, which will be a full-time working week

Day rate: £235 a day

Location: Flexible working is offered, though we expect each role to spend an average of at least one day per week on site at our South Kensington campus across the six months. These days in the office will be in addition to the entire week leading up to the festival, and the festival weekend itself.

Brief owner: James Romero, Public Engagement Programmes Manager at Imperial College London, j.romero@imperial.ac.uk

Background

The Great Exhibition Road Festival is a free annual celebration of science and the arts in South Kensington. Approximately 20 partners from across South Kensington come together to fill Exhibition Road, the Imperial Campus and partner buildings, with installations, exhibitions, research-based demonstrations, inspiring talks, creative workshop, and performances.

The Festival will return next year on 7 and 8 June 2025, with Imperial College London again leading on its delivery. For 2025, the Festival organising team within Imperial are looking to recruit 2x part-time Festival programme coordinators to help the inhouse programming team deliver themed zones of engaging festival activities for a variety of festival audiences.

Each role will have distinct focus:

- One will be looking after the Family Fun Zone, which is the Festival's dedicated space for family audiences - including a Family stage, which will feature a two-day lineup of family friendly shows and performances.
- The other role will look after 2-3 smaller and more specifically themed Festival zones, each offering a mixture of content that will appeal to adult and family audiences alike.

Aims of the Festival

- To create a unique festival that connects some of the world's most iconic institutions in an inspirational fusion of the arts and sciences.
- To deliver a dynamic range of participatory visitor experiences that generate curiosity and a pioneering spirit among our audiences and institutions.
- To engage 50,000 people through events taking place on Exhibition Road and across partner institutions over the weekend of the Festival.
- To engage communities and audiences who do not usually access our institutions through co-created projects that are part of the Festival weekend.
- To celebrate diversity – the diversity of our communities, and that within art and science.

How we will programme the 2025 Festival

For the 2025 Festival the Imperial Public Engagement team will be contracting two freelancers to curate, organise, and manage collections of content aimed at our diverse audiences, which will be brought together into engaging Festival zones. As a result, the work outlined in this brief will require both creative curatorial input; organised, logistical, and operational planning skills; and project management.

Throughout October and November, Imperial research teams will be writing up proposals for tabletop demonstrations, exhibitions, workshops, talks, and performances, which the central Festival organising team will subsequently review and divide up into zones (or collections of content) for mapping onto the Festival site. It is the ideas from this open call, and a second one run with Festival partners, that will form the core of activities that the freelance Festival programme coordinators will build their Festival zones around (an approach which contrasts with other festivals that rely more on hiring-in activities from external providers).

In addition to curating the broader set of zone content that comes through proposals, the Festival programme coordinators will be required to select a particular research team from each zone whose proposal could be developed into high quality art-science workshop. This will require the programme coordinators to facilitate a collaboration between the chosen Imperial research team and an artist / art educator proposed either by the Project coordinator themselves, or by the central Festival organising team. There will be budget allocated to support costs for materials and any artist assistants required.

The type of Festival content that these two Festival programme coordinators will need to develop and manage in each Festival zone includes:

- Exhibits / installations – these are tabletop exhibits staffed by Imperial teams, or a Festival partner, who will spend their Festival weekend engaging the public with demonstrations or interactive object handling. Alternatively, an object / collection of objects (e.g. a photography exhibition) can be installed within a space as a talking point, which is also staffed by teams to discuss the story behind it. In most of our Festival zones the majority of content usually comes from tabletop stands like this. Most teams who propose exhibits will have delivered something like it before, so part of the Festival programme coordinator roles will be to identify which teams require more support to work out the logistics of what they want to do, or to think more creatively about their exhibits.

- Workshops – defined as making / creating activities that take over an entire room or collection of tables. Festival workshops are mostly run as drop-in activities, so thought must be put into staffing the spaces and the provision of instructions to ensure attendees know what they are doing quickly after arriving. As mentioned above, the workshops that the Festival programme coordinator will be working on (likely one per zone) will often involve an Imperial academic team working in collaboration with a freelance artist, art educator, or craft workshop facilitator. The Festival programme coordinators will be much more hands-on and involved with these workshop collaborations than for their average exhibit stand team. This will include managing the relationship with the freelancers, as well as inputting their own ideas to ensure the creation and delivery of enjoyable, engaging activities over the weekend.
- Misc – whilst the majority of zone content will fall into the categories of exhibits and workshops, there are opportunities to offer alternative experiences to public visitors should you find a suitable location and should the academic teams be keen to deliver this type of activity. Examples of these less common components of Festival zones might include stage performances, such as can be found on the family performance stage, which has been a regular feature of our Family Fun zone. Other examples might include art installations, public votes, ideas walls, short talks programmes, and behind the scenes tours of nearby facilities.

Role responsibilities

1. Ensure high standard and relevance of content in your zones for our public visitors
2. Ensure Festival content reflects the aims and objectives of the Festival where possible and, where appropriate, embraces the overarching themes of art and science coming together
3. Curate a collection of activities that delivers great public engagement and a fantastic visitor experience, which ensure that exhibiting teams have considered and addressed:
 - their target audience and their prior understanding of the research topic
 - what sort of activities they might be keen to engage with at a festival
 - how they can give the many hundreds of potential visitors each day a good experience of their activity (rather than just a select few)
4. To review the proposals submitted by Imperial teams and use that as the basis to develop engaging Festival zones. This process might include:
 - Advising teams on the most appropriate content ideas from their proposals, and any limitations on floorspace / the size of their team
 - Identifying teams whose ideas are not appropriate or workable within the Festival context, and support the development of alternatives ideas that will work at this event and for this audience
 - Ensure that there is a diverse mix of content in each of your zones – in terms of the types of subtopics covered under the central zone theme, as well the types of engagement on offer – e.g. a well-balanced zone might contain one or two creative workshop activities mixed with more scientific live experiments or technology demos, as well as at least one opportunity for the public to gets hands-on or express their own opinions on the research being carried out at Imperial
5. To manage and build relationships with the exhibit teams allocated to you and act as their main point of contact for any Festival related queries
6. Communicate and keep teams to the tasks and deadlines they need to meet if they wish to participate in the 2025 Festival. This will include:

- Collating and reading all health and safety documentation from each team, raising concerns around risky activities with central Festival team early on
 - Collating equipment needs
 - Drafting proposed floor plans with your proposed layout for your zones
 - Drafting performance stage timetables (if required)
 - Checking and signing off the final floor plan and equipment list whilst ensuring that they both correspond to one another
 - Considering the number of volunteers needed over the Festival weekend and assigning specific roles for them and their supervisors
7. To report to the Festival management team on progress, and where necessary, join them at meetings or make simple presentations to present updates
 8. To feed into the Festival publicity campaign by identifying opportunities for raising awareness of and previewing festival content with potential attendees, as well as contributing to any printed, digital & social media marketing material and collateral. This will include:
 - Producing a public facing title for each of your zones as well as brief description for publicity materials, the what's on pages of the Festival website, and the printed Festival programme
 - Coordinate all signage, including wayfinding and the title and description copy for each activity in your space. This will need to be completed on a form provided by the central Festival team
 9. To adequately brief the volunteer team who will be supervising your zones across the Festival weekend during the periods you are elsewhere (e.g. lunch breaks / supervising another zone)
 10. To support and supervise any set-up of Festival content on the Friday and/or Saturday morning before the Festival opening:
 - Meeting individual teams, showing them locations, helping them where required, ensuring they have all the equipment that you requested on their behalf
 11. Managing one of your Festival spaces during all or part of the Festival weekend and overseeing the pack down on Sunday evening. This will include managing volunteers allocated to your parts of the programme when onsite at the Festival
 12. To participate in the Festival debrief sessions and feedback on your experiences to help our planning of future Festivals
 13. To host debriefs group or individual debriefs with the teams you have worked with, and feedback the results of these sessions to the Festival management team

KEY DEADLINES

N.B. these are indicative and subject to change. A more detailed event delivery timeline will be shared with the successful applicants upon starting their role

December

Due Date	Action
Early December	Festival Line Manager provides you with list of proposals for your zone/s for you to review and make notes on

Mid December	Festival Line Manager provides you with scale drawing floorplans of your zone/s and accompanies you on tours of the location/s to discuss how they can be used by exhibiting teams across the Festival weekend
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January

When?	Action
Ongoing	Start working with exhibitors on developing content – feeding back on their proposals over email or hosting calls / meetings with them to find out more about their ideas and how you can accommodate them within your zone
Mid-January	Festival Line Manager hosts an intro call with programme coordinator and allocated zone teams, which will cover the timeline and deadlines for key paperwork such as equipment orders, risk assessment form sign off, lunch voucher allocation and car parking requests

February

When?	Action
Early Feb	Identify and reach out to freelance workshop developers and kickstart collaborations with Imperial teams in your zones
Ongoing	Continue working with exhibitors on developing content – feeding back on their proposals over email or hosting calls / meetings with them to find out more about their ideas and how you can accommodate them
End of February	Present the initial draft outline of your zones in the form of draft floorplans and initial equipment lists

MARCH

When?	Action
Mid-March	Draft zone descriptions (add any performance stage timetables if required) for programme and website, and submit to Festival team
End of March	Final zone equipment forms and floorplans to be submitted

APRIL

When?	Action
Ongoing	Collect and review RAs for each exhibit and workshop, ensuring they have sign off from departmental or faculty safety officers, before submitting them to the Festival production team

MAY

When?	Action
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Early May	Collect lunch requirements and car parking / car drop off requirements from your exhibiting teams
Mid-May	Final and amended risk assessments submitted

JUNE

When?	Action
Early June	Write supervisor briefing docs for those overseeing your zones across the Festival weekend / covering your lunch breaks
06 June	Festival set up day – your teams arriving to set up their stands and workshops in your zones
07/08 June	Festival weekend
09-20 June	Finalise payment arrangements for any artists/contributors to your zone Host debriefs with teams Attend a short debrief meeting with Festival management team