

BiCon Running - The Formalities

If you are considering running a BiCon, we firstly thank you for your interest.

This document aims to provide you with an outline of the expectations we at BiCon Continuity Ltd (BCL) and the BiCon community will have of you as prospective BiCon Organisers. As a charity, we have legal obligations to ensure the funding we provide is spent lawfully and appropriately. We also need to ensure you understand the BiCon Guidelines which have been developed to define what makes a BiCon within the community over two decades. BCL will do our best to support you and guide you to people and places which can help you get skills you may not currently have.

We hope we have found the right line of friendly and approachable but also serious and realistic.

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BiCon Guidelines

Question/consideration	Space for your answers
Are you willing to follow the BiCon Guidelines, prioritise equality and diversity and anti-harassment before, during and after BiCon?	
Do you think you will need to depart from any of the Guidelines?	

Your official details

Question/consideration	Space for your answers
Please can you provide the legal name and address of one or more people who will be responsible to BCL for the funding we provide?	
Let us know your pronoun preferences so we can use them correctly when referring to you.	
If your legal name is not public, please let us know and provide us with your preferred name for common use. Your legal name and address won't be shared outside of BCL directors.	
<p>If you have a BiCon bank account for money transfer please can you let us know which bank, Account name, account code and sort-code.</p> <p>If you are still setting up your bank you can send this information later.</p>	

The BiCon Details

Question/consideration	Space for your answers/comments
<p>Do you have any idea about where you hope to hold BiCon e.g. city or venue, or are you still investigating?</p> <p>We can provide you with some funds to make some site visits although we recommend research and phone enquiries first to identify likely suitable sites first. We can also put you in touch with recent teams who may have venue information to share and may be able to help find local people who may be able to help with site visits or give local information.</p>	
Do you have any idea about length and dates you hope to hold your BiCon for? If not, that is OK and can be answered once your venue is secured.	
Have you worked out a team structure or are you still working on this?	

Contingency Plan if you cannot run BiCon

BiCon Organisers often have other life commitments and challenges as well as making BiCon happen. These can include things like living with disability or health issues, paid and unpaid jobs, housing issues, family commitments like children or caring responsibilities. Life can also change suddenly through bereavement, sudden worsening of health, housing, job or financial insecurity etc.

Life events may mean that trying to run all or some of BiCon can result in risk of harm to your physical and mental health or cause you other difficulties. BCL does not wish anyone to experience harm from running a BiCon which is why we are asking you to think about your contingency plans now.

In our experience even when handover from people unable to continue running BiCons has been limited it has been possible with some work to ensure there are no hard feelings within the BiCon community and that the focus is on support and making the alternative-BiCon happen as best as possible.

It is important that you understand that if for whatever reason you cannot run BiCon as you have signed up for that there is no shame in reducing your commitment or resigning entirely. If you do need to reduce or stop your BiCon commitment, what BCL really want and need is information about what is happening and if necessary, handover of whatever has been done to date, so that we can seek out replacement organisers so BiCon can (where possible) still take place.

It is useful to have a plan for what happens if you “are incapacitated” so making sure someone else can access the bookings information, accounts files, website logins, emails sent to date, contract with your venue etc.

It is also useful to make sure your volunteers know that they too can withdraw and that if they are able to do so by handing over their work that there will be no hard feelings.

Question/consideration	Space for your answers/comments
Have you been able to consider contingency planning in the event you are incapacitated?	

BiCon Organising - Tasks and Roles to Consider

Making a BiCon happen involves a number of essential tasks such as bookings, venue liaison, financial management, as well as workshops, entertainments, conduct and equalities and so on. It is up to you how you manage these tasks but some of the questions and comments may be useful for you to think about.

There are also some issues around BiCon Organising learned (sometimes the hard way) over the years by past organising teams due to the unique nature of our event which we have included. BCL would rather know about things you aren't 100% certain about doing so we can support you to get advice, guidance and help as soon as possible and these things don't become a barrier to you running a great BiCon.

Sources of support

If you offer to run a BiCon is accepted, the key members of your team can be added as members of The BiConOrganisers Dreamwidth community who can help you with any of these if you are stuck or BCL can put you in touch with people who may be able to work with you 1:1 to advise and assist you with any of these issues if you don't know where to start. If you wish to access either of these please email info@biconcontinuity.org.uk.

Finance

Question/consideration	Space for your answers/comments
At least one person who can do finance? (ie. Balance accounts, prepare a budget?)	
Have you thought about preparing a budget?	
Have you got a plan for tracking incoming money and outgoing expenditure?	
Does your finance person have access to the information and money in the bank account?	
Do you have internal (team) policies about what money can be spent on BiCon's behalf?	

Public image of BiCon

People perceived as BiCon organisers or significant volunteers are seen as representing the views of BiCon as an entity even when acting in a personal or other capacity.

We recommend any team members or volunteers are asked to read and follow the BiCon Organisers' Guidelines and any other policies you have in their behaviour around BiCon. Examples of important things that ought to be covered include:

- confidentiality of attendees' booking information,
- ensuring people try to avoid doing or saying discriminatory or inappropriate things in public in the run up to and during the BiCon.

Venue

Question/consideration	Space for your answers/comments
Do you have someone who can liaise with the venue?	
Do you have someone who feels confident negotiating and signing the contract with the venue? It is usually helpful if this person is confident using the telephone and is able to maintain regular communication with your venue contact to keep everything running smoothly.	
During BiCon more than one team person may need to liaise with the venue – are there any team people who cannot do this easily?	

Bookings

Question/consideration	Space for your answers/comments
Do you have someone who can do bookings? This is a job which involves dealing with attendees (mostly by email), answering queries, discussing and requesting money and payment and tracking booking requirements and whether the money has been paid or not accordingly.	

Previous years have used a spreadsheet but online ticketing systems may also be suitable. Sample booking spreadsheets are available on the Organisers' section of the bicon.org.uk website.

Equalities Fund

Question/consideration	Space for your answers/comments
<p>Have you thought about how to manage the Equality Fund?</p> <p>Especially bearing in mind that it can be stressful having to decide how to use the money most fairly, implementing who gets what money or dealing with people who might not like your decisions.</p>	

Some teams have outsourced the Equality Fund to an external-to-team volunteer or team of volunteers to reduce stress on the bookings people. BCL may be able to help you find someone if you want to do it this way.

Communications and dealing with difficult people

Question/consideration	Space for your answers/comments
<p>Do you have people who can respond to communications about BiCon by email and telephone?</p>	
<p>Do you have people who can manage difficult people?</p>	
<p>Do you know how to set and communicate limits about what you can and can't provide?</p>	

BCL is very happy to talk to organising teams if you are experiencing difficulties with difficult people as there are sadly always a few who take up a lot of time. We can put you in contact with experienced organisers who you can talk to about how to set your team boundaries and support you if you have difficulties in this area.

Workshops / daytime sessions programming

Question/consideration	Space for your answers/comments
<p>Do you have someone who can do daytime session programming?</p>	
<p>What do you consider to be the limits of appropriate content for sessions at BiCon?</p>	

Evening social events

Question/consideration	Space for your answers/comments
Do you have someone who can do at least one evening social event?	

Widening participation, diversity and equalities and conduct

Question/consideration	Space for your answers/comments
Do you have someone who is responsible for widening participation through removing barriers to access? Someone who can help link with individuals and communities, work on improving BiCon so we can be as accessible to as many people as possible.	
Do you have policies about anti-harassment, anti-discrimination and confidentiality and a reporting system for breaches?	
Have you thought about what your version of the Code of Conduct will look like? Previous policies for adaptation are on the bicon.org.uk websites.	
Have you thought about how you will deal with reports of problematic behaviour before and during BiCon? Volunteers to assist with this can be found outside of the organising team so there is someone who isn't trying to make BiCon happen and deal with difficult stuff.	

Publicity

Question/consideration	Space for your answers/comments
<p>Do you have someone who can be responsible for publicity?</p> <p>Both traditional and social media experience can be very useful.</p>	
<p>Do you have someone who can manage websites and social media?</p>	
<p>Are you aware of how to deal with negative coverage or incidents that occur on social media?</p>	
<p>Do you have a team member or volunteer who can put together your BiCon handbook?</p> <p>This doesn't have to be complicated, but basic office or DTP skills can be useful.</p>	

Potential checklist of key events and tasks

	BiCon Guidelines considered - do you have any questions?
	Main organiser(s) - do you need support finding volunteers or people with specific skills?
	Cast and crew (ongoing)
	Venue (may be tbc)
	Budget
	Bank account and Money tracking system
	Booking System
	Publicity plan – when; where, website etc
	How to communicate with attendees
	Schedule – workshops and entertainment
	At-the-event volunteers
	Responding to enquiries