



Group Organiser Guidance

Application guidelines

Before you apply, there are some general principles, information and explanations that we'd like you to read and consider, to help you make the most of your application:

- **It's the 30th Anniversary, and that's a big deal.** Bear this in mind, when discussing ideas for your group and writing your application. There are exciting plans afoot for extended events and celebrations in and around the Beltane Festival itself, and the Event Coordinator, Board and Blues will be happy to fill you in on these – feel free to email. It may not be relevant to your group, it is not an obligatory consideration, and not incorporating it will not mean your application experiences bias - but you may find it interesting, or inspiring, to look back on previous iterations of the group you're considering organising. There could be creative ways to incorporate this 30th theme into your activities, or for your group to take part in the wider calendar of events planned, that mean you and your group's experience of the festival is deeper and, essentially, more fun.
- **There's a deadline.** Your application should be sent to festival@beltane.org before the deadline specified on the Application Form. The Blues and the Board are happy to discuss your application in advance, but it must be submitted in its final form, before the deadline! This ensures that everyone has the same time frame in which to prepare their proposal, and ensures there is enough time post-deadline for decisions to be made, and preparations begun for the Open Meeting. Late proposals will not be considered.
- **There will be an opportunity to meet with Board members, Blues, experienced and prospective Group Organisers (GOs), on Sunday 22 January 2017 at the Canon's Gait pub from 2pm-5pm.** This is a chance for you to discuss your ideas in advance and ask for support: particularly useful if you have a fantastic idea and are looking for another GO! If you are planning on submitting an application for a core group, this is also an important opportunity to discuss your ideas with the Blues and Board members.
- **You may be called to a meeting with the Board and Blues to discuss your application further, before a final decision is made.** This does not imply any negative bias, or that there is a problem with your application: these discussions are a chance for the Board and Blues to ask for clarification, or even inform prospective GOs of other submitted applications, for groups that they may want to consider working with, and gauge feelings. The dates for the interviews are listed on the application



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form and you will be given as much notice as possible if we'd like you to come in for an interview. All GOs must attend this interview: if this isn't possible, please inform the Board of this when submitting your application, so alternative arrangements can be made.

- **You may submit TWO applications for two different groups.** Please consider this if you're planning to apply for a group that you suspect may be a popular option. Board decisions on groups will be final, so if your application isn't accepted, there will not be an opportunity to submit an additional application after the deadline, or create a group further on in the process. If the Board receive two applications for the same, or very similar groups, we will inform both sets of applicants, in order to give you a chance to submit a second proposal, should you wish to. Details of who has put in a second application, and for which group, will not be disclosed to the Board until decisions have been made on the first 'round' of applications, so that the possible presence of a second application cannot influence decision making. If submitting a second application, please make it clear which is your first choice as this will be the one circulated for consideration during the first 'round'.
- **Consider fire!** Beltane is a fire festival so it is worth thinking about how you could incorporate fire into your performance. It's not exclusive to those groups with 'fire' in the name!
- **Be. Flexible.** Be aware that being accepted as group organisers doesn't mean that your application is now set in stone. It takes a lot of work on behalf of everyone involved, to combine all the applications into one single story, and all groups will be expected to have some give and take. The Blues and Court will work with you and the other GOs, to ensure all group stories are honoured as much as possible, but it is important to remember that this is a collaborative endeavour, that will require negotiation and compromise. Bear in mind that your group members will have as much to say on what your group does as you do, and this is why we ask for concepts and themes in your application, rather than a full storyline.
- **Be prepared for disappointment.** No matter how totally awesome you think your proposal is, or how many times you've done it before, it is possible you won't be successful. The Board of Trustees will meet to discuss applications on **Monday 6 February 2017**, and you may be called for an interview on the **Tuesday 7 or Wednesday 8 of February**, before the final decision is made. All applicants will be informed of the outcome by email, as soon as possible after this meeting – so please make sure an email address is included on your application.



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A few general guidelines for application:

- Over 18's only. It's our policy for Membership.
- It's a common misconception to believe that we must have all the groups from last year. Feel free to propose something alternative or to refresh and renew an old character or idea.
- Feel free to contact the Board (festival [at] Beltane [dot] org) and/or Blues (blues [at] Beltane [dot] org) with anything you'd like to discuss. They will respond as soon as possible, bearing in mind all are volunteers, who undertake these roles in their spare time.
- The decision on the outcome of an application is a joint and united decision, made by both the Blues and the Board. ALL prospective GOs will be notified by email, on the same day, of the result of their application.
- You must be available for the following:
 - A (possible) Board Interview – Tuesday 7 & Wednesday 8 February 2017
 - Group Organiser Weekend – Saturday 18 & Sunday 19 February 2017
 - The Open Meeting – Sunday 26 February 2017
 - Every Tuesday evening from Tuesday 28 February 2017 – Tuesday 25 February 2017, for Group Organiser meetings, with the Event Coordinator, Blues, and Trustees

Guidelines for the form:

- Don't be afraid – there are no trick questions. We just want to know your background and ideas so we know how you'll fit into the festival. If you don't understand anything, please ask.
- Keep it short. There will be a lot of applications to read through, so keep it font size 11, and use bullet points. Remember that a lot of things will change between your application, and the final event – go for broad strokes, with bullet pointed highlights and key features.
- GOs are responsible for facilitating a positive and cohesive festival experience for a group of volunteers. We ask you to include the names of TWO fully informed and prepared GOs on the form

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to ensure group leadership can continue, should one GO become unable to take part, for whatever reason. Recruiting a member of the group is not appropriate, as all GOs need to be considered and approved by the Board in advance. If you are struggling to find a co-GO, feel free to contact the Board or Blues, who can help.

Whilst two GOs is preferable, there can be occasions when there are good reasons for the presence of a third organiser. If you feel a third GO is necessary to your group, please submit their name in the application, along with a brief explanation of the reasoning behind their presence, and the role(s) they will undertake in the group.

GROUP AND ORGANISER DETAILS

- **Full contact details.** Full name, telephone, email, and preferred contact time. ALL prospective GOs will be contacted by email, with the outcome of the application.
- **Maximum group number:** This is the absolute maximum number of people that you would want to have in your group including GOs, helpers, fire tech and so on. If you're unsure about this, please ask the Blues or Board for guidance.
- **Leadership experience.** As it says on the tin: experience in leading groups can come from BFS events, or external situations. You don't have to have been a BFS organiser before – but we'd still like to know of your experience in leading and managing groups in any capacity. It won't necessarily count against you if you don't have this experience, but it will help us identify where support may be needed.
- **Performance experience.** Similarly, it's not necessary to have had previous experience in this area, but if you have, let us know. It may strengthen your application, and will help the Board and Blues know what support and guidance you might need.



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GROUP CONCEPT

- **A summarised description of the concept, character and core themes for your proposed group.**
Give us a clear idea of your overall concept, the character and main themes that matter most to your group: this is the framework that you will be asking your volunteers to hang their ideas off. If you can, let us know how you see your group fitting into the overall themes and story of Beltane: bear in mind that the final version of this will be created in collaboration with the Blues, the Court and the other groups involved. Remember that this year is our 30th anniversary, and there is a wider programme of events and workshops planned, around the main festival. This theme may not be relevant to your group: it is not an obligatory consideration, and not incorporating it will not mean your application experiences bias - but you may find it interesting, or inspiring, to look back on previous iterations of the group you're considering organising. There could be creative ways to incorporate this 30th theme into your activities, or for your group to take part in the wider calendar of events planned, that mean you and your group's experience of the festival is deeper and, essentially, more fun.
- **Interacting with the crowd.** The audience will want to interact with you – how do you see your group interacting with them? Do you envision having an interactive or passive audience? Are you outgoing and approachable, or contained and distant? Friendly, or hostile? We want the audience to have an unforgettable experience on the night, and a major part of that is their interaction with you, the performers.

RUNNING YOUR GROUP

- **Running your group.** How are you going to recruit, and ultimately select your final group? What methods, processes and approaches will you use, to lead your group? Our general policy is that groups must operate within a “cooperative and collaborative environment”, and it's important for us to know how you intend to create and maintain this.

Don't be too worried though: the Open Meeting is a fantastic place to recruit your initial volunteers! In addition, you'll be able to request shout-outs on the BFS blog and social media – and ask for support from the Blues and Board.



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- **Specific skills or knowledge.** Do you intend to do activities that require specific skills, like fitness training, acro, drumming, stilt walking or fire spinning? Tell us what skills and knowledge you have that will enable you to personally train your volunteers in these skills: if you don't personally have them, that's not a problem, just let us know what ideas you have for making sure your group can learn them.
- **Additional support.** It's important to highlight if your group involves fire, or involves large amounts of physicality. It may be that you'll be asked to meet with the Health and Safety officer before an agreed date, to make sure that you are able to create your performance in a way that is safe to your group, to the other members of the festival, and to our audience.
- **Money.** It costs money to take part in Beltane. How much do you think group members will need to spend, and how will you manage this? For example, do you want to collect the funds and act as the buyer of any supplies, hopefully ensuring economies of scale; or leave it up to the individual members? When preparing the group budget please bear in mind that there can be 'hidden costs', such as costumes, cloaks or props, on top of the core group costs. BFS also offers a subsidy for the paint used by groups on the night of the event, and also operates a subsidy for drum groups. If you'd like to know more about either of these ahead of time, feel free to ask the Board.
- **Minimising risks and instilling responsible behaviour.** You are responsible for your group, and how its members behave, when in a BFS context. What basic things can you do to keep the activities and the members of your group safe? How will you ensure everyone behaves responsibly and respectfully - not only to our audience members, but to the other members of the Society?
- **Contingency planning.** From time to time things happen to everyone that can't be predicted. It's important to enter your group, and the next few months of your lives, with measures in place to minimise the effects on the group and the festival, should the unexpected happen. For example, keeping group members informed about the details of the festival throughout the run-up, or asking for volunteers from within the group to take on more responsibility if absolutely necessary. BFS also has many resources and experienced members that can be called upon to help. When you're thinking about backup plans, remember you're not expected to undertake any of this alone: the rest of the production team, the Board and the Blues are all here to provide support if you need it.

Beltane Fire Society



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- **Illness or Disabilities.** BFS is an inclusive society: not everyone has the same level of ability and not everyone can access all groups equally; not everyone has the physical ability to do certain activities, or the mental or physical health to stick to strict attendance regimes.

If your group activities are genuinely not accessible for people with certain conditions or disabilities, please be honest about this. Whilst the ideal is that anyone can take part, it's vital for us to have a realistic idea of what limitations will exist. We will not dictate how accessible your group needs to be, but we do ask you consider whom you might be excluding, and how you could be more inclusive.

GOOD LUCK – WE CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR YOUR IDEAS!