

Sydney Writers' Festival

Role Title: Production Manager

Reports to: Head of Production and Operations

Salary Range: Competitive, commensurate with experience

Terms: 5-Month, Fixed-term contract, January to June 2027

Sydney Writers' Festival encourages applications from all backgrounds, communities, and industries, and is committed to having a team that is made up of diverse skills, experiences and abilities.

About Sydney Writers' Festival

Sydney Writers' Festival is one of the world's leading and most beloved literary institutions. It is a place for readers, writers and thinkers to share ideas, tell stories and celebrate literature.

Since our first Festival in 1997, we have brought thousands of diverse writers and thinkers from Australia and around the globe together in Sydney. In the company of the world's best novelists, poets, journalists, public intellectuals, economists, politicians, podcasters and scientists, we've discussed some of the most pressing issues of our times. We've celebrated prize-winning authors, long-awaited novels from writers at the height of their careers and introduced debut authors to eager and enthusiastic new audiences.

Readers and writers have exchanged thoughts and opinions, perspectives and philosophies, creating a powerful community based on radical dialogue and respectful debate. The drumbeat of questioning that thrums underneath the Festival is powerful and enlivens Australia's democratic tradition.

About this role

This role is an opportunity to join the Sydney Writers' Festival team as Production Manager for the 2027 Festival and year-round Events. Reporting to, and working closely with, the Head of Production and Operations, the Production Manager will support the planning and delivery of production and operational requirements, with responsibility for production planning, technical delivery, logistics, budgets, contractors and event crew.

The successful candidate will have substantial experience in the production and delivery of large-scale festivals, events or public programs, with demonstrated experience managing complex production requirements, teams and suppliers.

Responsibilities

Production, Technical & Planning

- Support the Head of Production and Operations in the planning and delivery of the production and operational requirements, including schedules, staffing, resources and production timelines.
- Provide production and technical advice to the Head of Production and Operations and CEO on venue suitability, technical requirements, production methodology, costs and operational considerations.
- Develop and coordinate Festival precinct and venue layouts in consultation with the Head of Production and Operations and relevant Festival teams, including staging, seating, audience flow and infrastructure such as temporary toilets, box office facilities and signage structures.
- Undertake research and obtain quotations for the provision of equipment, supplies and services.
- Oversee the coordination, hire and return of all required technical and site-related equipment.
- Prepare production briefs to form the basis of suppliers' quotes.
- Liaise with suppliers and venues on technical and production matters.
- Support the preparation of technical event documentation, spreadsheets and site plans.
- Develop and maintain production schedules, critical paths and delivery timelines across Festival venues and workstreams.
- Coordinate accessibility delivery across Festival venues, including accessible seating, access services and wayfinding.
- Implement sustainability and waste initiatives across the Festival precinct and capture data to support impact reporting.

Financial & Budget

- Support the Head of Production and Operations in the development of the production budgets, including venue and equipment hire and event staff, and monitor expenditure in these areas.
- Manage allocated production and event budgets, monitor expenditure and commitments, and identify and report budget variances to the Head of Production and Operations.

- Obtain and assess supplier quotations and provide recommendations to the Head of Production and Operations to support cost effective procurement.

Leadership and Team Management

- Oversee the recruitment, scheduling and supervision of casual production crew.
- Lead and supervise production staff, casual crew and contractors, providing clear direction, expectations and support throughout planning, bump-in, Festival operations and bump-out.
- Coordinate daily production operations across multiple Festival venues, ensuring teams, suppliers and contractors have clear schedules, responsibilities and points of contact.
- Coordinate security, crowd management and traffic management contractors in line with approved event plans.
- Contribute to post-Festival debriefs and reporting to support continuous improvement.

Venue & Stakeholder Management

- Liaise with venue management, technical teams, suppliers, contractors and internal Festival teams to coordinate production requirements and resolve operational issues.
- Attend venue meetings, site inspections and production briefings as required.
- Coordinate venue access, bump-in/bump-out requirements and production documentation across multiple sites.

Work Health & Safety

- Implement and monitor WHS requirements across Festival production activities, ensuring relevant legislation, policies and procedures are followed.
- Lead the identification, assessment and management of production and event risks, maintaining risk registers and contributing to Event Management Plans.
- Support the Festival's incident management and command structure across bump-in, live event days and bump-out.
- Establish temporary event venues when required and support the Head of Production and Operations in securing the necessary council and landowner approvals.

Selection Criteria

Key Selection Criteria

The successful candidate will have:

- A minimum of 5 years' experience in event production, festival production, venue operations or a related field, with demonstrated experience delivering complex public events.
- Demonstrated experience working collaboratively within small and large team environments.
- Demonstrated experience leading and coordinating production teams, casual crew, contractors and suppliers in complex event environments.
- Demonstrated experience coordinating concurrent events across multiple venues, sites or locations.
- A proactive and committed approach to continuous improvement.

- A mature and confident manner and be able to work calmly and effectively with a wide range of people, including artists, venue production staff, suppliers and sponsors.

Essential

- Exceptional time management skills to ensure events are executed on schedule and within set timeframes.
- Comprehensive knowledge of health and safety regulations and protocols relevant to large scale events
- Experience contributing to Event Management Plans, risk assessments and incident management procedures for public events.
- Sound financial acumen to track expenses, control costs and report on budgetary compliance.
- Highly developed interpersonal and communication skills.
- Demonstrated experience using Microsoft 365, SharePoint, with working knowledge of CAD, preferably Vectorworks.
- Proven ability to show initiative, positivity and collaboration, while working calmly under pressure and maintaining a high level of attention to detail.

Desirable

- Experience with IT set-ups, networks and live-stream broadcasts.
- Ability to adapt and implement digital technologies and trends in festival production.
- A current first aid certificate and/or WHS qualification.
- Experience delivering accessible events.
- Knowledge of sustainable event practice.
- A current NSW driver licence.

How to apply

To apply for this role, please send your resume and a cover letter demonstrating how you meet the selection criteria. Applications should be addressed to Hall Murray, Head of Production and Operations, and be sent to jobs@swf.org.au.

Please include two (2) professional referees. Please note: Referees will only be contacted following prior consultation with the candidate.

Applications close at 5pm on Friday 23 October 2026.

Early applications are encouraged, as we may proceed with an appointment once a suitable candidate is identified.

If you have any questions prior to applying, please direct them to jobs@swf.org.au