

Senior Operations Manager

Slapstick Festival

Slapstick Festival is one of the UK's leading celebrations of classic screen comedy. We are seeking an experienced senior operator to lead the planning, delivery and evaluation of the annual Festival and associated year-round activity.

Reports to	Festival Director, Chris Daniels; regular reporting to the Board as agreed
Location	Bristol based (Aardman Animations, BS1), with flexible working and attendance at Festival venues
Hours	Three days a week, including evening and weekend work around events
Salary	£38,000 full-time equivalent; £22,800 a year at three days a week
Contract	Initial six-month fixed term, with extension subject to funding and performance
Start	As soon as possible, allowing for any notice period.

Role purpose

The Senior Operations Manager is the principal operational lead, oversight, systems development and project management, ensuring activity is delivered safely, efficiently, on time and within budget. The role oversees rights, screening and venue logistics oversight, finances and stakeholder relationships while supporting the artistic vision of the Festival Director and Board.

Key responsibilities

- **Strategic leadership.** Translate artistic and organisational priorities into annual plans, develop detailed systems and timelines, performance reporting, including BFI requirements.
- **Festival delivery.** Lead operational planning across screenings, performances, talks and special projects; maintain schedules, running orders, guest logistics, briefings and contingencies; and act as senior operational lead during events.
- **Film rights.** Lead oversight of film acquisition, bookings, permissions and licensing, maintaining accurate records and ensuring obligations are fulfilled.
- **Print management.** In collaboration with the Festival Producer, oversee receipt, testing, secure tracking and return of DCPs, files and archive formats. The Producer may handle day-to-day tracking; the Senior Operations Manager retains senior oversight and accountability.
- **Venue management.** In collaboration with the Festival Producer, oversee liaison with Bristol Old Vic, Bristol Beacon, Watershed and other venues. The Producer may manage routine communications; the Senior Operations Manager retains the senior relationship and resolves contractual, budgetary or delivery issues.
- **Financial management.** Maintain operational and event budgets, rolling cash flow, committed-cost records and break-even scenarios; monitor expenditure, ticket income and variances; manage controls, procurement, suppliers and funder reporting.
- **People.** Coordinate with Festival Producer re : freelancers, contractors, seasonal staff and volunteers and work placements, with clear roles, training, realistic workloads and supportive accountability.
- **Risk and compliance.** Lead practical arrangements for health and safety, safeguarding where applicable, insurance, licensing, incident reporting, data handling, accessibility and operational resilience.
- **Stakeholders and evaluation.** Maintain relationships with guests, rights holders, archives, venues, funders and sponsors; support partnerships and income; and turn post-event evaluation into improvements.

Person specification

Essential

- Experience managing complex projects, substantial budgets, teams, volunteers, contractors and multiple stakeholders.
- Strong financial judgement, including budgets, cash flow, break-even analysis and early action on variances.
- Outstanding organisation, project management, communication and stakeholder-relationship skills.
- Evidence of independently owning delivery, making sound decisions and managing competing deadlines without close supervision.
- Working understanding of event risk, health and safety, accessibility and inclusive practice.
- Calm problem-solving, attention to detail, integrity, flexibility and resilience under pressure in a festival type setting.
- Competence with Asana or comparable project tools, ticketing reports and financial spreadsheets.

Desirable

- Film-festival or screen-sector experience, including holding complex project management strategies.
- Some experience in festivals, arts, cultural institutions or comparable multi-venue live events.
- Experience of BFI or comparable funding processes and governance, grant compliance, sponsorship or earned income.
- Knowledge of Bristol's cultural sector, film exhibition, heritage cinema, accessibility, audience development and environmental practice.

Benefits and approach

This is an opportunity to shape one of the UK's most distinctive and creatively successful film festivals, work with leading cultural organisations and contribute to its future sustainability. We are looking for a collaborative senior leader with initiative, sound judgement and a commitment to inclusive, accessible and excellent audience experiences.

How to apply

Please send your CV and a covering letter outlining your relevant experience and why you would like to join Slapstick Festival to Chris Daniels at chris@slapstick.org.uk, with **Senior Operations Manager Application** in the subject line.

Shortlisted applicants will be notified by **14th October 2026**, with interviews taking place on **23rd October 2026**