The Event Organiser’s Guide
Leeds Digital Festival: The Tech Event for Everyone

The Leeds Digital Festival is an open, collaborative celebration of digital culture in all its forms.

Whether you're interested in coding, FinTech, social media, AI, HealthTech, data, start-ups, digital music, cyber security or AR/VR, we've got something for you.

Returning in 2024 for its 9th year, and following the success of the April “mini-fest”, Leeds Digital Festival will be hosting a two-week programme packed with world-class tech content this Autumn.

With an ever-growing voice and reach, Leeds Digital Festival will continue to celebrate the digital expertise and innovation that is happening in the city on a regional, national and international level.

The Festival, which has maintained the same collaborative approach since it first began in 2016, will operate on an open-platform system – meaning that anyone can host an event, and it's free to do so. From start-ups to tech giants, anyone with a passion for tech and digital is encouraged to get involved and be part of Leeds Digital Festival 2024.

Join us from the 16th – 27th of September as we invite the tech world’s best and brightest to come together and showcase our dynamic digital sector.

Key Dates

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<td>Tuesday 4th June</td>
<td>Event submission platform opens</td>
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<td>Wednesday 24th July</td>
<td>Last day for event submissions</td>
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<td>Monday 19th August</td>
<td>Announcement of Festival programme</td>
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<td>16th – 27th September</td>
<td>Leeds Digital Festival</td>
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What are the requirements to be part of the Festival?

We encourage everyone in the Leeds Tech community to take part in the festival. However, we want to provide the best experience for the community. With this in mind, our team will consider the following criteria when reviewing submissions for the programme:

- The information and visual assets are complete and follow the specifications
- The event booking system is up and running
- The event has a clear relation to technology
- The event is relevant for the community in the Leeds City Region
- The event provides clear value to the attendees, and it is not only a sales pitch

If your event does not meet these basic requirements, you will receive feedback from the team and will be given some time to make the appropriate adjustments.

What's the difference between submitting my event to Leeds Digital Festival and the Leeds Digital Platform?

Leeds Digital is an extension of the much-loved Festival that provides a platform for the City Region’s tech community to share knowledge, exchange ideas and collaborate year-round. The creation of the Leeds Digital platform allows us to host events outside of the Festival periods and to support events hosted by organisations across Leeds and beyond throughout the year.

The Festival, in comparison, takes place over two weeks in September. The most significant difference in adding your event to the LDF programme is that this is more curated than the Leeds Digital event listing. We’ll make every effort to reduce overlap in content and avoid scheduling clashes, so we may ask you to tweak your event so it works in line with the other events in the programme.

The Festival programme is also where we concentrate the majority of our marketing efforts, so including your event in the September programme will open it up to a broader audience.
FAQs

Can I add my event to the Leeds Digital platform if it has been approved for the LDF programme?

Leeds Digital Festival is a longstanding event within the Leeds tech calendar, and part of the appeal is that it brings together a unique programme of events.

Including all LDF events on the Leeds Digital site dilutes the Festival offering and leaves less room for the events not included in the Festival programme to stand out on the platform. As such, we politely ask that if your event is included in the LDF programme, you don’t add it to the Leeds Digital listing. Any LDF events duplicated onto the Leeds Digital platform will be removed.

Can I submit more than one event to the Leeds Digital Festival programme?

Yes, you can submit more than one event to the programme, but quality will always be more important than quantity and one strong event is likely to have more impact than three or four less well-thought-out sessions.

Consider whether you have enough material and more importantly, enough resources, to be able to support the workload that comes with hosting multiple events within such a short space of time. Please also note that each new event should be added to the LDF site as a separate submission.

My company isn’t based in Leeds. Can I still submit an event?

The Festival is a celebration of all the brilliant tech happenings within the Leeds City Region, which includes Bradford, Calderdale, Craven, Harrogate, Kirklees, Selby, Wakefield and York, but each year we proudly welcome event hosts, attendees and speakers from other areas. Renowned as “the tech event for everyone”, we’re open to contributions from anyone with a passion for digital but events within the programme must have a clear relevance for the region.

How much does it cost to include my event in the festival?

If you are hosting an event that is free to attend, there will be no fee payable to LDF for the inclusion of your event in the LDF programme. However, if your attendees will be charged for a ticket we will contact you to understand more about the nature of your event. In some cases, a fee may be payable to LDF. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will be discussed with you if appropriate.
Planning Your Event

Coming up with the content

We’d recommend kicking things off by working out what you want your event to look like. Is it a chance to show off some of your technical skills? Or maybe you want to bring industry experts together to tackle a burning question? Equally important – who will benefit from attending, and why should they want to hear what you’re saying?

Once you know what it is you’re looking to gain from involvement in the Festival programme, you’ll be able to come up with content that helps to meet these objectives and deliver value to your attendees. If it’s not something that you’d want to attend yourself, then you might need to go back to the drawing board.

Making your event Accessible & Inclusive

At Leeds Digital Festival we’re committed to breaking down the barriers to Digital Accessibility because we believe tech is for everyone. As an LDF host, you’ll be expected to introduce suitable measures to your event to ensure that it can be accessed by anyone who’d like to attend.

Access requirements vary from person to person and between different event formats, and the best way for you to make sure attendee needs are met is to go straight to the source. By asking in advance, you can make sure that the relevant measures are in place and that all attendees can engage comfortably.

Sites like Eventbrite make gauging access requests really simple – you’ll just need to enable this option on the booking form. If you’re holding a physical event and there are restrictions at the venue, make them clear on the booking form (e.g. ‘Not wheelchair accessible’ or better still – find a venue that is!)

If you’re hosting a virtual event, both Zoom and Microsoft Teams offer a live captioning feature which is a cost-effective way to improve the event experience for people with hearing impairments. Or, if you’d like to go a step further, you could employ a BSL interpreter to sign your presentation. Providing attendees with slides in advance of the event is another simple way of improving accessibility, and one we’d recommend all hosts consider.

When employing additional accessibility measures for the first time, we strongly recommend conducting a run-through to ensure the experience for contributors and the audience is as stress-free as possible.

If you have questions or concerns about the accessibility of your event, please contact the Leeds Digital Festival team.
Planning Your Event

Diversity Matters

Representation matters at all levels of industry and across all sectors, and by now we all know that diverse teams make successful teams. So there really is no excuse for submitting an event that doesn’t offer up a range of perspectives, lived experiences and roles within tech.

Aside from the obvious benefit of allowing for a more well-rounded discussion, events that are representative of the diversity within the tech sector and wider UK can also help to attract a broader audience and encourage more sign-ups to your event. A diverse panel that features contributors of varying genders, races, ethnicities, ages and seniority level also sends the message to attendees that your company supports and encourages a diverse workforce, which could prove beneficial if one of the goals of your Festival involvement is expanding your talent pool.

Variety is the Spice of Life

Does your event have a varied mix of speakers? A common oversight for companies when planning speaking engagements is looking too close to home for contributors. Sure, you want to guarantee that the discussion remains relevant to your organisation, but that doesn’t mean you should only feature speakers from your own company!

Why not ask some of your suppliers, customers, partner organisations or even competitors to feed into the discussion? Academics can also offer a different way of looking at things. This is a great way to add depth to your event without losing focus.

If you’re looking to explore another angle and need help sourcing a few more speakers for your event, get in touch with the LDF team and we’ll do our best to match you with appropriate contributors. Though we can’t guarantee that we’ll be able to find the perfect person, we do our best to play matchmaker!
As Leeds Digital Festival runs on an open platform system, we welcome submissions from businesses across the digital sector. So, whether you’re just starting out, scaling up, or a tech powerhouse in your own right, there’s room for you at #LDF2024.

In order to feature your event in the September programme, you’ll just need to send us the event details – including an event title, image, description, and booking link – for our team to review before listing on the website.

Our submissions page will go live on Tuesday 4th June and remain open until Wednesday 24th July. We’ll announce through the website and our social media once it’s open for business. Please note that your event details should be sent via the submissions page only – events sent via email will not be listed as part of the programme.

Check out what you’ll need to submit below so you can get cracking with your event planning:

### Choosing an Event Title

What’s in a name? Quite a bit actually. We’re expecting to include over 200 events in the September Programme, so your title needs to stand out and clearly communicate to your audience what they’re signing up for.

Think of the event name as your first chance to make an impression on potential attendees. If the title’s a snooze-fest people might assume the same about your event, and whilst a snappy name alone can’t guarantee good attendance, it certainly doesn’t hurt!

### Top Tips:

- **Get straight to the point** – There’s nothing worse than a wordy title that still leaves you scratching your head. Choose something that gives attendees a clear idea of what they’re signing up for, in as few words as possible.
- **Avoid generic titles** – Put yourself in the shoes of someone browsing the LDF website: faced with 200 events, who’s got the time to guess what content your event might include?
- **Make your title as specific as possible** to ensure that the right people are signing up.
- **Don’t be afraid to be funny**! – Tech is a serious business, but your event name doesn’t have to be. A memorable tongue-in-cheek title can do wonders for sign-ups, and establish the tone of your event before it’s even begun. Here are a few cheeky examples from previous years:

  - “What the FLoC”
  - “Your Place or Ours - The Future Workplace”
  - “The Road to Better Data – a Highways England Ontology”
Choosing an Event Image

The title and image are the first two things anyone will see. Together, they set the tone for what value your event will deliver, long before anyone has had a chance to read the full description. Here’s how to make your visuals work hard so you don’t have to.

**Hi-res, low-text** – They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and when it comes to a thumbnail, that tiny picture has got to do a lot of talking. So, for obvious reasons, avoid text-heavy images and opt for something that communicates the focus of your event with visuals rather than words. Please don’t include the event date, time or venue in your image. This information will all sit directly below the image on our website and will mean that you’ll need to create new artwork if any of the event details change.

**Size matters** – To ensure that your event image looks right in situ on the LDF website, please make sure that it adheres to an aspect ratio of 2:1. We’d recommend sizing at 2160 x 1080px.

**Functionality is key** – Before making your selection, think about the various ways the image will be used in the lead-up to the Festival. As well as featuring on the website, the image you choose could be incorporated into social media marketing, mailers, ads and more. In this instance, it pays to be pretty!

**There’s no shame in a stock photo** – If you have an in-house marketing team that’s happy to knock you up a graphic or two, that’s great. But if you don’t, we’d recommend utilising sites like Unsplash, Shutterstock and Pexels which are packed with thousands of free images – just let us know the artist’s details so we can credit them accordingly.

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**Top Tips:**

- **Hi-res, low-text**
- **Functionality is key**
- **Size matters**
- **There’s no shame in a stock photo**

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**Example event image**
Writing Your Event Description

When it comes to creating interest in your event, a snappy title and strong visuals will do a lot of the hard work, but the description is where the real magic happens!

It’s your opportunity to tell the audience what unmissable content you’ll be bringing to LDF, and why attendees should want to book a ticket. For maximum impact, we’d recommend keeping it to a few paragraphs and being as creative as you can.

Keep it simple – The best descriptions give the audience a taste of what to expect from the event. Avoid overwhelming potential attendees with inaccessible jargon, and only use terminology that’s relevant to your audience.

Who’s the event for? - It helps if you’re clear about who your audience is. Is this a niche event for specialists in a particular field? A ‘101’ for people looking to find out a bit more about the subject? Identify the audience you want to attract and then take this opportunity to tell those people that this is the event for them!

If in doubt - If you’re new to the festival and looking for a bit more guidance on how you should structure your description; start by contextualising your core event question, provide a brief outline of the topics up for discussion, and then let attendees know who’ll be speaking at your event.

Choose your guests/panellists wisely
Your description should explain the value each contributor brings to the discussion – why should someone want to hear these people speak? Have they built an award-winning company from the ground up? Maybe they’re pioneering life-changing tech? The event description is a great place to shout about the brilliant, diverse panel you’ve built out, so include short speaker bios when you submit your event. If you’re still firming up speakers, you can email these details to us at a later date. You’ll also be asked to include the URLs for your speakers’ LinkedIn profiles so that people can find out more about them before booking a place at your event.

Detail the experience on offer – If you’re providing refreshments at your event, let people know! It may help them to fit your event into a busy schedule, especially if your event will take place early in the morning, straight after work, or over a lunch break. Plus, who doesn’t love a cuppa and cake?

Top Tips:

Submit Your Event
Adding Your Booking Link

Leeds Digital Festival runs on an open platform, so in addition to planning and hosting your event, you’ll also be responsible for managing the booking process.

This means you’ll need to create a booking page and provide us with the link during the submission process. We then add this link to your event listing on the LDF website, so we can direct potential attendees straight to you.

Please make sure that the event date and time listed on your booking page reflect the details given on your submission form - (you’d be surprised at how often these details don’t match!)

Which booking site you choose to list the event on is completely up to you; we just need the link. Around 90% of our hosts use sites like Eventbrite or Zoom Webinar.

Please note, we won’t be able to approve your event without a live booking link.

The Final Details

In addition to the above, during the submission process you’ll also need to select which areas of the digital sector your event is most aligned with from a list of 22 possible categories (HealthTech & MedTech, AI, Data etc.). Selection is limited to a maximum of three categories to allow for more efficient search and filtration on the LDF website, and to ensure the right people find your event.

You’ll also need to select the date and time of your event, which you can do using the calendar. If you’ve selected a time already occupied by an event covering similar tech categories, the calendar will notify you.

Given the scope of the Leeds Digital Festival programme, some overlap in the schedule is inevitable, but we’d strongly recommend that you avoid hosting at the same time as an event covering similar content.

If you’re hosting a Fintech event, for example, a scheduling clash with an Edtech or AR/VR event would likely have little to no effect on your attendance, but a scheduling clash with another Fintech event could prove problematic for everyone involved.

In addition to working twice as hard to vie for the audience’s attention, you’ll also be putting potential attendees in the difficult position of having to choose which event to go to. In short, nobody wins!

The LDF team will make every effort during the submission review process to identify potential overlap in the schedule, and will contact you directly should we need to discuss any scheduling concerns regarding your event. If you have any questions about the festival schedule and wish to talk with the Festival team directly, you can contact us on admin@leedsdigitalfestival.org

The Leeds Digital Festival Awards will take place 6 pm to 9 pm on Thursday 26th September. This is an invitation-only event for shortlisted award nominees, award category sponsors, and LDF’s Premier and Executive sponsors. If you are considering entering your organisation for an award, (or you know that one of your key speakers may be included in the awards event) make sure to choose a different time for your event.
Once your event details have been submitted, they’ll be reviewed by the Leeds Digital Festival team. The review stage is where we’re able to double-check the quality of the events being entered into the programme, and that we have all the information we need. We’re looking for fun, relevant and innovative events to help showcase the city’s dynamic digital sector.

Once your event has been reviewed, the team may get in touch with some suggestions or amends where appropriate. This could be anything from a small tweak to your event description, to selecting a different time slot if your first choice clashes with another event aimed at a similar audience.

In some instances, the team might get in touch to offer up some thoughts on the event content, or make suggestions as to how your event could better align with the Leeds Digital Festival brand and the programme of events already confirmed.

Once we’ve ensured that your event submission is complete we will send you an email to confirm that your event has been approved for inclusion in the Leeds Digital Festival programme.

If your event doesn’t pass the review stage, we’ll be in touch to let you know next steps.

Although we have a seven-week window for event submission, it’ll come as no surprise that the vast majority of events are submitted within the 48 hours before the deadline! If you get your event submitted early, it means we’ll have more time to work with you if you need help, or to contact you if we’re unsure about something in your submission.

Please allow for up to 5 working days from submission before contacting us about your event – we’re a small team manually checking hundreds of event submissions!

After the submission deadline of the 24th July, we will review the schedule as a whole to identify any potential clashes in the timetable. If your event clashes with a similar event, our team will contact you to discuss this and give you the opportunity to make the appropriate adjustments.

The full programme will be published on the 19th August 2024.
As an LDF event host you’ll have access to our captive audience of tech enthusiasts, and your inclusion in the Festival programme means you’ll also benefit from our in-house marketing activities. But when it comes to telling people about your event, you’ll be expected to conduct your own promotional activity, too.

As well as listing all events on our website, in the lead up to the Festival we’ll be pushing out regular organic content across our social media, and website. We’ll also be rolling out a paid social and PR strategy where we’ll be able to spotlight some of the exciting events taking place at the festival. In previous iterations, this has included working with regional and national press outlets like The Yorkshire Post, Prolific North, Thebusinessdesk, Insider, Business Cloud and more to spread the word about what the Festival has in store.

Given the volume of events the September programme will include, we can’t promote every event individually, but we’ll do our best to ensure that a broad range of events is promoted in the lead-up to the Festival. One way to ensure that your event makes it onto the LDF channels is to create your own content for the team to engage with – make sure to tag the Leeds Digital accounts and use #LDF2024!

Promoting Your Event

In previous years, we’ve found that those hosts who regularly share engaging online content around their event generally benefit from higher sign-ups and attendance levels. The more you shout about your own LDF involvement, the more we can amplify the message that you are putting out.

Visit our socials
Any questions?

We hope this guide has provided lots of useful information, but if you still need some extra guidance, feel free to send your questions over to the Leeds Digital Festival team on:

admin@leedsdigitalfestival.org