

This is a plain-text version of the RISER 2025-26 Application Information. For the full web version with formatting, [please click here](#).

Apply for RISER 2026-27 by June 30, 2025.

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW AND SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION FORM](#)

What is RISER?

RISER works to take obstacles out of the way of you producing a big, bold new idea through a training program and TWO presentation opportunities for your work.

RISER is Common Ground Arts' collaborative producing model originally developed by Why Not Theatre in 2014 to address barriers to independent producing in Toronto, Ontario.

Our support might look like:

- Grantwriting support;

AKA: We'll help with every draft and make sure you've got all the materials you need right til 11:59 on deadline day

- Hands-on help building budgets and calendars;

AKA: We'll talk through every budget line and make sure you're able to stay on track

- Assistance in liaising with partners and collaborators;

AKA: We'll connect you to all sorts of great humans in our city and across Canada

- Production and technical support;

AKA: We'll make sure you've got everything you need for your work to look and sound awesome

- And helping you get access to other spaces and resources!

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RISER artists also participate in "All-RISER Sessions": 8-10 producing workshops on topics like contracting, working with technical artists, marketing,

accessibility, and more facilitated by Common Ground with guest speakers from across Edmonton's professional theatre industry.

YEAR ONE (Summer 2025 – Spring 2026)

- You'll attend All-RISER workshops and get one-on-one assistance from Common Ground producers in grantwriting, finding project partners/mentors/artists, and accessing development opportunities (special thanks to our Development Partners, Azimuth Theatre!)
- You'll also attend a couple of meetings with your presenting partner to discuss potential opportunities for you at their Festival.
- At the end of year one (May 2026), you'll share a work-in-process of your project at the brand new RISER New Works Festival, hosted by Common Ground Arts.
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YEAR TWO (Summer 2026-Summer 2027)

- You'll work with your paired presenter to share your work as part of their Festival. This may be a full production, staged reading, workshop presentation, or anything in between based on what your partner is able to offer your project at its stage of development.
- Your presenting opportunity will be scaled to meet what your project needs & what your partner is able to offer.
- Throughout year two, all RISER artists will have access to the Common Ground team to help you get ready for presentation.

Keep reading for more details about each presenting opportunity!

What fees/resources will I receive?

At this time, there is no fee attached to participating in RISER's training program. Artists will receive presenting fees both from the RISER New Works Festival work-in-process showing in 2025, and (where applicable) from their 2026 Festival Partner.

As your show's producer, you will be responsible for funding your project, producer, and artist fees (but we'll help you do that every step of the way).

What you will be provided with is a package of in-kind resources along the way. This includes, across both presenting opportunities, at no cost to you:

- A performance venue,
- Technical and event labour,
- Ticketing & box office management,
- Marketing & outreach,
- Accessibility support,
- Promotional/archival photography & videography,
- Hands-on support building your team and administering your project, and more!

Upon being invited to the program, all artists/companies will be paired with one of three Edmonton-based presenting organizations: Common Ground Arts (that's us!), the Edmonton International Fringe Theatre Festival, or Theatre Outré.

At the 2026 RISER New Works Festival, all RISER artists will share work-in-process readings and excerpts of their projects alongside other great programming celebrating new ambitious multidisciplinary creation in Edmonton. Projects will continue developing their work towards a guaranteed presentation in 2027 at their paired Festival.

Who is a good fit for RISER Edmonton?

RISER is built to support any artist or project facing barriers to professional opportunities.

This might include:

Artists facing cultural/linguistic/physical barriers,

Artists working on stories and styles that are underrepresented on Edmonton's stages,

Or artists with significant artistic practices who are beginning to transition to producer roles.

Ultimately, remember that RISER is a producer training program, not an artist training program. We want you to bring your artistic practice — we're here to help you figure out the how.

We support artists and companies from all performance disciplines. At this time, the program is restricted to the Edmonton Metropolitan Region, the Enoch Cree Nation, Alexander First Nation, Paul First Nation and Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation.

Collectives and companies may apply so long as you do not receive any type of operating funding. Any collectives/organizations who work solely on a project-to-project basis are eligible. (Not sure if this is you? [Get in touch!](#))

The 2026-27 RISER Festival Partners

Applicants are able to identify their preferred partners as part of their submission to the program. Final selections including partner pairings will be made by a panel of producers from each organization and communicated to successful projects alongside their invitation to the program.

RISER New Works Festival (Common Ground Arts Society)

In 2026, the RISER New Works Festival will feature work-in-process showings of the RISER 2026-27 participants and a mainstage presentation of our paired project for the RISER 2025-26 program.

- For programming at the 2027 Festival in May (in addition to your 2026 work-in-process showing).
- The slot will offer between 4-8 full performance slots and require artists to set/strike their show between performances.
- We are able to support any discipline or level of background, but will prioritize projects with some prior development (a script reading/workshop, work-in-process showing, etc.)

From Common Ground:

Common Ground Arts works primarily with artists and companies experimenting at the margins of artistic presentation or audience-artist relationships. We aim to platform artists and projects whose work starts conversations and addresses gaps in what is seen on our city's stages.

The project paired with RISER will be the mainstage show of our 2027 Festival and will be presented alongside work-in-process showings of projects starting their RISER journey next year.

The artists will receive:

- a presenting fee between \$3,000-\$7,000 dependent on show scale,

- a venue with technical and event labour,
- and hands-on support in the second year of their RISER program from the Common Ground team in producing their show.

Edmonton International Fringe Theatre Festival (Edmonton Fringe Theatre)

The Edmonton International Fringe Theatre Festival is the largest, longest running Fringe Theatre Festival in North America. Edmonton Fringe was born of a revolution. We are a grass roots, DIY movement that cultivates ongoing collisions between community and art. We exist because theatre exists, and what exists here doesn't exist anywhere else in the world. The vibrant success of the Edmonton Fringe Festival is thanks to the more than 43,000 Artists who have bravely taken an artistic risk with us since we exploded onto the scene in 1982. It's thanks to the more than 500,000 Fringers who fringe to their fullest with us every August. It's thanks to the more than 1,000 Volunteers who continue to help build one of the world's most influential arts movements.

- For programming at the 2027 Festival based on the needs of the project (August 12-22, 2027)
- Fringe is looking for anything and everything that's suitable for the stage.
- This slot will prioritize equity-seeking artists.

From Edmonton Fringe Theatre:

Fringe Theatre is offering one (1) lottery venue spot and 6 performances to an artist/artistic group as part of the 2027 Edmonton International Fringe Theatre Festival. Indoor shows are awarded approximately \$10,000 of in-kind support. Specifically, Lottery recipients receive:

– performance venue, equipped with seating risers, chairs, staging, and masking; lighting and sound equipment; two (2) professional Technicians for a venue walkthrough, one (1) technical rehearsal, and each performance; and box office, advertising, and marketing support.

RISER Edmonton will cover the typical registration fees for shows at the Edmonton Fringe Festival.

Quaint, Quirky, & QUEER (Theatre Outré)

Theatre Outré is a professional theatre company based in Lethbridge, Alberta, founded in 2013. Theatre Outré is a leading outlet for alternative and Queer

theatre in Alberta and the producer of the hugely successful Quaint, Quirky & QUEER Cabaret & Festival. Theatre Outré also produces a series of Improv shows through ImpromptOu and programs Drag Shows and other Queer-focused events at the Owl and throughout the community.

- For programming at the Quaint, Quirky & QUEER Cabaret & Festival in Spring 2027.
- Theatre Outré is mandated to support 2SLGBTQIA+ artists.
- This slot will involve the artist self-producing a 2-3 show run in Edmonton (with support from CG) followed by a 2-3 show run in Lethbridge at the QQ&Q Festival.

From Theatre Outré:

Projects must be 2SLGBTQIA+ led. Theatre Outré is seeking artists who have a bit of experience under their belt but are looking to level their practice up to tour shows.

The selected artist will be promoted alongside the QQ&Q lineup and receive support confirming their venue, technical labour, and outreach needs. This slot will be best suited for smaller-scale shows that can easily fit a festival setting.

How to apply

Click [HERE](#) for an application form! The form will collect basic contact and project information as well as confirm your eligibility. The main basis of your application will be a letter (three pages maximum) outlining:

- Who you are, what you do, and why you want to be a part of RISER Edmonton;
- About your artistic experience;
- If relevant, past producing experience;
- An overview of your project: what is it, why are you passionate about it, who's involved (confirmed and even hopeful), scale of production (specific personnel or equipment/design needs); and
- What you're hopeful to gain from being a part of RISER.

You may also include a CV or resume, though this is not required. Applications close June 30, 2025.

Guide to a great RISER application: Frequently Asked Questions

Is there any compensation or fees attached to the program?

Artists will receive presenting fees both from the RISER New Works Festival work-in-process showing in 2025, and (where applicable) from their 2026 Festival Partner.

At this time, there is no fee attached to participating in RISER. Instead, you will be provided with a package of in-kind resources along the way to reduce your direct costs of producing a work at a Festival by up to one-third. This includes RISER providing event labour, producing mentorship, marketing support, equipment rentals, and more at no cost to the producer.

You as the project producer will be responsible for funding your projects and artist fees (but we'll help you do that every step of the way).

Note that there are no presenting fees applicable from the Edmonton Fringe Theatre Festival, but in turn RISER will pay the artist's registration fees and the artist will retain 100% of their Box Office.

I want a mainstage production at the end of RISER. Is that guaranteed?

No, the scale of your presentation is not guaranteed. We recommend you take a close look at each presenter's opportunities in the section above. Each presenter has a different scope of presentation to offer.

It is your responsibility as a RISER producer in year one to dedicate time to the development of your show – the scope of the final offer you receive from your presenting partner will be dependent on the status of your project (including funding you've accessed, show development you've completed, team members you've contacted, etc).

How are RISER applications being assessed?

RISER applications will go through two rounds of evaluation.

In the first round, a panel of producers from each partner organization will review all applications based on RISER's criteria:

- Need: Is RISER essential for you to be able to create this project?

- Diversity: Are you demonstrating something we don't often see on Edmonton's stages (in form, content, language, culture, or style)?
- Feasibility: Is this project achievable in the resources and opportunities RISER is able to provide?
- Experience: Can you reasonably complete this project with your level of experience plus the training & resources provided by RISER?

The highest ranking projects will then be paired with presenting partners based on each partner's specific needs and capacity to support projects. The three paired projects will make up the 2025-26 RISER cohort.

What is my job as a RISER project producer?

As a RISER producer, you are responsible for the development and execution of your project. This includes writing and submitting grants, hiring artists, marketing your show, and working with your presenting partner.

That sounds like a ton of work! We totally agree.

Our job as your friends at RISER is to make all of those tasks easier. That might look like staying up with you to polish that grant draft, answering your "how does this thing work?" texts, or connecting you to incredible folks we know who might take your team and project to the next level. It also looks like a series of workshops we'll program where you'll hear from some of our favourite producers in Canada about how they like to work.

At the end of Year One (May 2025), we'll produce the RISER New Works Festival, where you'll have a guaranteed slot to share a work-in-process of your project. We'll give you a presenting fee and pay for your venue and labour. You'll be responsible for building your presentation.

Then, in Year Two, you'll be responsible for providing your presenting partner with everything they need — but we'll still be available to help every step of the way.

I've never made a show before OR I have made many shows before. Is RISER for me?

We've had many artists come through RISER having never produced or created a performance project before – even artists who've never worked professionally in the arts!

What's important to remember is that RISER is a producer training program and not an artist training program. We'll help you access resources and mentorship, but ultimately the creative leadership of the show is all yours. If you're less experienced as an artist, we recommend approaching the program with a development/small-scale project rather than a big production.

RISER is designed for artists looking to take the next big step or risk in their creative practice. If you have an extensive artistic background, remember that RISER is a producer training program: If this is a skill you have not necessarily developed yet in your practice, RISER might totally be the right step for you.

My show is still just an idea OR my show has been previously produced. Is RISER for me?

Yes, projects of all sizes and histories are welcome in the RISER program. Note that your presenting opportunities, both in the RISER Festival in 2025 and your paired Festival in 2026, will be scaled to meet your project's stage of development.

AKA: If your project is still very early in its development, your RISER opportunities will be geared towards script/performance development over polished production.

Our goal with RISER is to support projects on their way to future opportunities. If your project has already been produced, you should have a clear pitch for what you need from RISER to scale your project to its next life after RISER. Does it need to be rebuilt from scratch? Was it produced on a small scale that you're looking to grow?

Is there such a thing as too big OR too small for RISER?

RISER aims to support projects on their way to long-term touring and festival lives following their participation in the program. Each presenting opportunity provides artists with between 1-8 performance slot(s) — and each requires artists

to set and strike their shows between slots. Ideally, projects are geared towards festival formats with quick set-up times and limited or scalable technical needs.

We are a company/collective. Can we apply for RISER?

Companies and collectives who do not receive any type of core or operating funding are eligible for the RISER program. Collectives/companies must work solely on a project-to-project basis.

I have great photos and video of a past workshop/presentation of my project. Why can't I put it in my application?

As excited as we are about your bold, exciting ideas, RISER is designed to be equitable to those who have been historically excluded from professional arts work. This means we intentionally do not assess your artistic or technical skill. We want to know where you're at in your practice, and how this project could get you to the next chapter.

Still have questions?

Common Ground's Managing Producer, Mac Brock is available to help you build your application. [Click here to book an appointment](#) to discuss the program and how it might be able to support your project.

Or, email us at admin@commongroundarts.ca and a staff member will get back to you ASAP!