

# Various Voices Festival 2030

## Call for Bids

Various Voices is the European LGBTQ+ / Queer Choral Festival. Legato Choirs and we are calling for bids from a single or group of member choirs to host our 17th Various Voices Festival in 2030.

### Introduction

The decision on who will host for the Various Voices Festival is one of the core functions of the Legato Board. The process involves a series of rigorous assessments in collaboration with the bidding groups, our panel of experts, the Legato Various Voices Team and an advisory poll of the member choirs choice. After the initial high-level applications are assessed, a short list will lead into an expanded in-depth report, interviews and an assessment with members' involvement. The criteria for assessment will ensure that our members are offered the best festival experience, that is exciting, as well as financial and artistic successful. The Legato Various Voices Team provides ongoing support and mentoring during the bidding process and oversight to the host team during the Festival cycle, with an agreed timeline of tasks set out in the License Agreement.

Legato's objective is to be clear and transparent to all stakeholders during the whole of the Festival cycle.

### The responsibilities of the Legato Board

- To fulfill its duty to members and stakeholders to ensure the Festival is a success
- To protect the investment of the loan and the income from the license fee
- To protect its asset "the Various Voices Festival" and the reputation of the festival for future use
- To protect the reputation of Legato Choirs as a responsible licensor and supervising authority
- To ensure a positive legacy for Legato and the Various Voices Festival
- To make sure the Festival meets all the necessary criteria for all members and stakeholders
- To ensure that the Festival is a financial and artistic success
- To mentor and support the bidding teams and the host group to make sure they succeed with this large and serious undertaking
- To have a duty of care to the host group for the mental health of their volunteer team and for the financial stability and sustainability of the host group/s

### The bidding stages:

1. An expression of interest, a 4-6-page high-level outline of the proposed bid
2. The proposed bids will be assessed and a shortlist agreed with the board.

3. The draft in-depth final bid document will be reviewed and scored to be returned with feedback to bidders to edit and submit the final festival 2030 bid document.
4. The final bid document with a video presentation, with a copy of the report from the panel shared with member choirs to review and score.
5. The board will select the host for the 2030 festival.
6. The board will agree a memo of intent with the host while the limited liability entity is created for the 2030 Various Voices Festival host and once created a legal License Agreement will be negotiated and signed with the host.
7. The host city will have time to work with the current host team to share, look and learn.
8. At the 2026 festival closing event there will be a handover ceremony to the host for the 2030 festival.

**Support and advice** will be available at each stage to all bidders, to ensure the quality of the bids and that each bidder presents their best case to host the festival. You should read the full bidding document and appendix online, so you are fully informed about the expectations and commitments to host a Various Voices Festival before proceeding. This also ensures you cover every aspect to submit a comprehensive bid.

### **The bidding process in detail**

1. **An initial expression of interest**, a high-level overview of 4 to 6 pages of A4, text with additional images, with the outline of the proposed bid, to include:
  - a. The vision of the festival, its key features and events, including what social events and local community engagement could look like and how the member choirs will be the central focus of the festival. Picking out key features that will make your festival a unique experience for all stakeholders.
  - b. When and where the 4-day festival will be (this is your choice)
  - c. Accommodation, Clear overview of options, Capacity, Ease to venues, Accessibility, Host Housing option.
  - d. The proposed team, roles, experience with key qualifying information.
  - e. The proposed venues and spaces (do not book any venues unless you cannot cancel without penalty)
  - f. What financial and in kind support do you have or will you seek from local, regional and central government, commercial sponsors and grant making bodies, with a proposed target for your fundraising.

g. A high-level budget with key area income and expenditure, plus an idea of the economic impact to the local economy. How much money will your festival bring into the local economy / businesses, from the attendees' to include local spending to attend the festival. e.g. local travel, accommodation, eating venues, bars, transport, local sights etc.

h. A commitment to make your festival physically and financially accessible, explaining clearly what this means and how you will deliver this.

i. A statement of your intentions regards the Choirs Support Programme, (the Legato and VV festival Policy) with a target on how much this will cost, which must be a part of your core festival budget i.e. income from registrations. You can fundraise, but cannot make the programme dependent on future fundraising.

J. Diversity, LGBTQ+ community and prevailing law and attitudes, what are the pros and cons of hosting the festival in your city / area.

k. Why do you want to host the festival?

l. Why should you be the host of the 2030 Various Voices festival?

2. **Assessment and shortlist.** The bids will be assessed against pre-defined published criteria and any clarification sought from the bidders. A report with recommendations will be submitted to the board, who will decide on the Shortlist of at least three bidders.

Working with the board is an essential element of success and we will be focused on each bidder's success. The board places greater importance on the financial viability, a realistic budget and a good artistic vision.

3. **The Shortlisted bidders** will be invited to develop an in-depth bid document of up to 30, A4 pages of text and diagrams. plus, images. The bid should cover all the areas outlined in the General framework section below, emphasis on financial viability, a realistic budget with income and expenditure, a strong, creative and exciting artistic vision, a timeline delivery plan, a strong team outline, great locations, exciting venues and lots of great ideas and social interaction and events.

The bid document will include an outline of the festival offer to all participants / stakeholders, an estimate of the registration fees is discouraged.

A video of up to 10 minutes to support your bid and location should be submitted as part of the final bid.

4. **The board will review and assess each draft bid** and give a written report to each bid team, to enable any adjustments before submitting the final bid and video.
5. **All the Final bids and a video presentation** of up to 10 minutes, to compliment the bid, will be published along with the Board assessment report on the Legato website.
6. **Interaction after the final bid submitted**, the bidders and board should consider webinars and other ways for member choirs to interact with the bidders and the board.
7. **Choirs Choice**, each choir will be able to **download and view the bids** online and

can complete a simple score sheet, the board will give considerable weight to the choirs members' choices.

8. **The Legato Various Voices Experts Team** will assess and score the final bid and member scores and present the board with a report with recommendations.
9. **The Host for the 2030 Various Voices Festival** will be agreed by the Board.
10. **The timetable for this bidding process** is outlined below.
11. **The handover to the Various Voices Festival 2030 host**, will take place at the Various Voices Brussels Festival closing ceremony in 2026.

## **Our Various Voices Festival**

The Various Voices Festival is owned by Legato Choirs and is licensed with a formal License agreement for a fee that is paid by the host the Various Voices Festival, under the authority and with supervision from Legato. The hosts' mission should include the objective to support equal human rights for all, by improving the quality of the venues and festival experience to ensure the festival is accessible physically and financially to all our stakeholders.

## **About Legato**

Legato was founded in 1997 to facilitate communication and dialogue between lesbian and gay choirs in Europe and to promote cooperation and support between choirs. One of Legato's main responsibilities is to ensure that a choral festival takes place, currently every four years. We do this by encouraging choirs from different cities to bid to bring the festival to their city, selecting the best bid and supporting the local choir in any way possible to host a successful festival. Over recent years the members have asked the board to expand the activities of Legato and find ways to better serve its membership. The Board has created a team of previous Various Voices Festival directors and Festival organizers who assist the Board to make the best decisions to meet its responsibilities to all. The Board is elected by the members every two years.

## **Legato Choirs Support Policy**

We are committed to support the creation and development of choirs and has created the **Legato and Various Voices Choir Support policy** to support members choirs:

- A policy that will assist Legato with decision making on the support and application of resources to members and as a basis for Various Voices Festival policies.
- This policy is a starting point for festival organizers and bidders to decide how to support member choirs to attend the Festival.
- To be transparent, open and fair to all members.

## **General framework for the festival**

**1. Participants:** The festival is open to members of Legato (European Choral Association) and Gala Choruses (North American based Choral Association). Membership of one of the two associations is a prerequisite for participation. Although

Various Voices is mainly a European LGBTQ+ choir festival, it is open for every choir throughout the world with temporary membership (details on application).

Qualifying Member choirs must have continuous fully paid membership of the respective association, since the date of the last festival or since the date that the choir first joined the respective association. Back membership subscriptions may be required to be paid by lapsed members, who are not up to date with their membership subscriptions.

**2. Vision:** The Festival showcases the creative and colorful diversity of LGBTQ+ / queer choral singing and is an important artistic and cultural event. The programme facilitates and encourages the exchange of ideas, information and contacts between the participating choirs, the host city and the surrounding area. The host venues and local government should ideally be involved in some way in the festival, to publicize the excellence of our LGBTQ+ choral tradition amongst the general public and to encourage an audience and participants in free and paying events.

**3. Festival activities:** The festival should provide sufficient physical space and time for each and all participating choirs, including the host choir/s, to have an equal amount of time to perform their own musical programme in a concert. In recent years, choirs have been allocated a 30-minute slot, although this can vary from festival to festival. The Various Festival is a showcase for all choirs and host choirs should, within reason, give the same stage time to participant performers, as it does to its own choir/s.

Various Voices is usually up to a 4-day festival with the start of the festival the Opening Ceremony on the Wednesday evening and the end of the festival on the Saturday evening. It's essential that the host is clear in their bid and in festival marketing. Events during the day on Wednesday should be preparatory or additional events that are optional and do not require participants to arrive a day early. The same for events on the Sunday should be optional events, so participants can return home as they wish.

As well as participant choir concerts which has to be the main feature of the festival and should be given proper prominence in the programme, planning should not plan too many events competing for the same audience.

The festival should include other larger concerts, opening, closing ceremonies and "Gala-style" concerts, outreach performances, choral activities around the whole area with as many events as possible being open to the public free or an appropriate fee, equivalent to the event proportionate to the non-singing delegate fee. A non-singing delegate option should be available with access to the same events as those that pay the singing delegate fee (except they do not perform) but at a proportionate fee to the singing delegate fee.

The festival may include workshops, meetings, round tables, exhibitions, conferences, seminars, social events, daily get-togethers, singer warm-up, classes, after show events and parties to give the delegates a variety of opportunities to learn, share, see, meet and celebrate our LGBTQ+ / queer culture and life together.

English is the agreed language of Legato. We respect and celebrate all languages and cultures from across Europe, but major events (not choir performances) at festival must be conducted predominantly in English.

The Board is open to creativity but any major planned deviation from this traditional template must be negotiated and approved by the Board.

**4. Choirs support programme:** The attendance of choirs without sufficient financial resources, especially from parts of Europe as agreed with the Board, should be supported. More information is outlined in the policy in the Appendix. This cost of the proposed programme must be calculated and included in the core budget (i.e. cost set against income from registration fees. There can be fundraising for the choir support programme but the programme cannot be dependent on fundraising.

The delivery plan for the allocation and distribution of the money and in-kind support must be set out clearly and the full details available at least 12 months before the festival starts. Supported choirs have a greater need and challenge to get their singers to the festival, so there needs to be certainty as to what is being offered and when that will be available to choirs and choir members, so they can make informed decisions about attendance. Hosts cannot expect supported choirs to bankroll the support. The methods to transfer money should be established early to enable the choirs to make the most economical purchases. This has to be a priority for the host to deliver this efficiently and effectively to demonstrate our caring and respect for this programme and its recipients.

**5. Venues, attendees and choice:** Recent experience is that over 100 choirs attend, bringing 3-4,000 singers and 2-3,000 family, friends, partners, spouses and allies, engaging possibly 10,000 members of the public. The festival programme, as well as the venues for concerts, other activities and events should be able to accommodate a festival of this size or larger as our community grows.

Participants are expected to be able to attend and enjoy as much of the Festival activities as possible, so the vicinity and ease to move between venues is an important factor. The timing and number of activities has to be carefully planned to ensure that attendees have proportionate and reasonable access to a variety of activities and care should be taken to not plan too many events at the same time, especially competing for audiences against choir main performances, or venues that are too scattered to allow easy access to various options.

Singers may well sing and participate in more than one choir and want to be involved in other events and activities and this needs to be factored into the logistics. This is a unique feature of choral festivals, unlike traditional conference plans, the unique feature of a choral festival needs to be made clear to any outside organizing suppliers you may be considering. Engaging with all stakeholders and the local community needs to be factored into venue capacity.

Collaboration between choirs and Choirs engagement with larger festival events is encouraged. The planning has to factor that music needs to be arranged well in advance. Choirs should be provided access to the scores and learning tools at least 6-months before the event, to allow for choirs planning and rehearsal time for singers.

## **6. Host Financial Assistance:**

An interest free loan of up to 40,000 euros is available to the successful bidder. Applications should include an outline of the cash flow forecast for the festival cycle, showing when the loan money is required. The loan may be paid in smaller amounts by negotiation with and at the discretion of Legato.

This amount must be repaid after receipt of adequate funds from the first revenues or at least before the festival begins as detailed in the festival agreement. These funds are reserved (ring-fenced) by the Board of Legato to support organizers of future festivals.

**7. License Fee** - a festival license fee is payable as detailed in the festival agreement. The fee is payable in two parts. Part one, 30,000 euros is payable before the festival commences and the Part two, 25% of any festival surplus, is payable after the festival.

**8. Help, support and advice:** The Board appoints the Legato Various Voices Expert Team populated from those teams who have organized previous festivals. They can provide ongoing help and advice, to support the bidding teams on request will offer further help and advice to the host team. We would encourage all bidders and hosts to make maximum use of this valuable resource of experts.

**9. Reporting to the Board:** The reporting requirements are laid out in the agreement, with milestones set out with deadlines, along with the supervision and reporting requirements to the Board and membership.

**10. Board Visit and Festival Attendance:** The board may need to arrange a site visit and you should make a modest provision for this in your budget.

The current Board members of Legato at the time of the Festival will be offered complimentary delegate registration and entry to all festival events and activities free of charge.

**11. Member choirs advance visit:** a pre-festival visit, a 'rendez-vous' event is important to showcase the city, venues, outreach and social event locations. This will build interest and enthusiasm and should be included in your marketing promotion plan and budget. Tourist centers and local governments should be approached to fund all your bidding costs and help with all aspects of the bid. Teams that show initiative in these areas will produce the strongest bid and set the stage for a successful festival.

**12. Insurance:** you will need public and employee liability cover and you should consider getting other event insurance as detailed in the Festival Agreement.

**13. Professional Fees:** as far as possible bidders should advise in the bid details the professional fees for agents, organizers, advisors, other professionals and suppliers that you may be considering engaging to help plan and run your festival. Include provision for any expenditure in your budget for the setup including your limited liability entity, office space and other support the full cycle that your plan requires.

**14. Host City Financial and Social Impact:** All bids should include an assessment of the financial benefit and other positive impact to their host city/s. Along with an assessment of the social impact of the Festival on the host city/s social structure/society. Advice document is in the Appendix.

**15. Environmental impact and sustainability:** to assess environmental and sustainability objectives as well as the community impact of your festival plan. We all want to ensure we take care of the planet and act in a responsible and sustainable manner. Local organizations and governments can provide help and advice about how best to achieve this and help you to outline how you can meet these requirements in your bid document.

**16. Physical Accessibility:** to provide a comprehensive report to review the accessibility to all proposed venues and locations, including the management's openness to ensure everyone irrespective of physical ability can fully engage with the festival.

Our Accessibility Guidelines (appendix) aspire to the highest standards. All spaces should be assessed for full step free access for stages, back of house, dressing rooms, toilets, green room preparation and holding areas, as well as front of house for audience and delegate viewing. Audience accessible space could be reserved in the auditoriums to meet the range of physical needs, with reserved accessible toilets as conveniently located as possible.

To include an assessment to evaluate what physical support could be needed to support the full range of disabilities, movement, visual, audio, as well as other mental disability and issues. Where appropriate to include a gap analysis to work with venues and locations for maximum engagement for all participants, audiences and stakeholders, outlining how you and they might tackle this challenge. Include any costs to achieve accessibility in your budget.

**17. Financial Accessibility:** to provide evidence that the festival entry points for all stakeholders are reasonably priced in terms of other local events pricing and affordable in terms of the overall costs to attend the festival.

**18. The costs for all reports:** should be estimated and included in your budget.

**19. Festival Legacy:** to provide an outline of how the festival will be recorded for posterity and how you will help and support others to host a festival. - media, images, video, document archive, workbooks or tool kits developed from your festival activity.

**19. Future Host Learning:** the team must agree to be willing to help the next hosts with their acquired expert knowledge.

**20. Festival Evaluation:** the successful bidding team agrees to carry out and publish an evaluation report after the festival about the Festival for participants, the public,



choir organizers, recipients of choir support programme, accessibility users and partners and contractors. Resources should be allocated in your budget to measure and access your success and impact for future festival hosts and legato members. To provide the Legato board within 6 months after the festival with a substantial detailed financial and statistical report in order to support the following hosts with sufficient information. This will be published on the Legato website. See appendix example.

**20 Content Structure of the application:** Applications must be submitted using the following structure so that information can be compared and scored fairly.

1. **The bid document** should be in written English text format, the use of pictures and illustrations etc should be kept to a minimum to maximize the content. This document can be translated and supplied in other languages as long as the main document is in English.
2. **The bid document** must be submitted as a PDF file, format A4. with the font size no smaller than 11 pt.
3. **A cover Letter and Statement** - Please send a cover letter with your bid and please include this statement: We have fully read the bidding document and are willing and able to host the Festival. We fully understand the requirements and we are willing in principle to accept the terms of the Various Voices Festival Agreement, to work with the Board of Legato and understand the financial and other obligations to host the Various Voices Festival.
4. **Applications must be submitted by email** to [variousvoices@legato-choirs.com](mailto:variousvoices@legato-choirs.com) as per the timeline, late submissions may be marked down.
5. **Please use the following headings**, not necessarily in this order, so we can compare and score each section:
6. **The Expression of Interest** – an overview of your festival with a maximum length 2-3 double sided A4 pages (4 -6 pages in total)
  - a. About our area - An introduction to the location, area, city or cities, geographical location, size, population, transport links etc
  - b. About us - Profile of the bidding team with the organization's experience with any team member with special appropriate skills.
  - c. Vision - A vision for the festival outlining the key elements of your festival.
  - d. Support - Outline what financial, professional and in-kind support do you expect or have already initiated with national, regional or local governments, funders, companies, organizations and any others you may plan to partner with to fund and deliver your festival vision
  - e. Venues - An overview of the possible venues you plan to use, with an idea of capacity and accessibility, the location of each venue in relation to your festival map if you plan a wider range of venues/spaces...

f. Arriving and Getting around – An overview of how to get to your city/s, how to get around, the physical accessibility of transport infrastructure and any subsidized travel you plan to negotiate or have already negotiated.

g. Staying - how do you propose to deal with accommodating festival participants and visitors to your area, outlining capacities and ease of locations to venues and transport, the physical and financial accessibility and queer friendliness of accommodation hosts. If you plan to offer hosted accommodation in private homes.

h. Diversity - overview of your LGBTQ+ / queer community and prevailing social and legal attitudes, the pros and cons of the impact of hosting the festival, the diversity of your area and how the festival might impact and how supportive do you expect your community / society to be.

i. Why you - What is special about you, your area or your bid that will mark you out from the other bidders - what makes you special.

**7. The shortlisted bidders** document is an in-depth document of up to 30, A4 pages of text and diagrams, with images. A video to support your bid is submitted at the final stage.

a. Cover with Festival – Title, Tagline/Slogan, dates, location, contents.

b. Information about the bidding team / organizer / choirs / organizations, include details of agents or professionals or event organizers or other known suppliers you plan to use and team members indicating special skills/experience.

c. Vision for the festival - outline your big picture, what you want to achieve with your festival, what you will deliver and what you want to leave behind, your legacy.

d. Program highlights, concerts and other activity with ideas of what the festival will look like the concert halls, other venues, spaces and outreach concert/activity locations

e. Arriving and Getting around – An overview of how to get to your city/s, how to get around, the physical accessibility of transport infrastructure and any subsidized travel you plan to negotiate or have negotiated.

f. Accommodation - overview to include possible hotels / hostels / student / holiday AirBnB lets, with estimated average price options and/or private accommodation host options and overall capacity for accommodation in each category or any other proposals on accommodation.

g. Budget - with a draft budget in spreadsheet format, to include the number of choirs and singers planned for the number of other participants and stakeholders planned for an indication of the range of participation costs an outline of what may be included in these costs any other income streams, major headline anticipated expenditure, venues, marketing to include all elements listed in this bidding; document. Each concert venue/space should list planned expenditure for each Company with limited liability setup and startup costs Insurance, office costs, accountancy fees. Bank and credit card fees Professional advisors, agents or other

providers fees Contingency of at least 10% should be included.

A usable calculating example of a budget is included in the Appendix.

h. Marketing plan for the whole cycle of your festival, with a timeline and planned actions, with a budget for the cost of each action.

i. Partners, sponsors, supporters, to include letters and documents with any promises or expectation of grants, financial support, sponsorship or "in-kind" offers. Outline of possible opportunities to apply for grants or funding, outlining criteria and support levels. Applicants are advised to be very conservative about including any of these figures in your budget until the money or contracts / agreements are signed and the money is guaranteed.

j. Anticipated financial impact report to the city, region and country, to understand the potential income you bring to your country, city, area that will assist you in seeking support, funding or grants. (see Appendix).

k. Environmental impact assessment, environmental objectives, sustainability objectives and the community / social impact.

l. Accessibility report to support the maximum engagement for participants and audiences to cover Physical and Financial Accessibility.

m. Support funding outline and explanation for choirs without sufficient financial resources.

n. Legacy, sharing, learning and festival evaluation.

o. A video presentation to compliment the printed document (specification in Appendix).

4. Please note that all information provided is a **draft** outline only of your plans and budgets.

**Do not** finalize venue bookings or events or enter into any **non-cancellable** agreements, without penalty for cancellation or sponsorship commitments until a Festival Agreement is signed with Legato. (See appendix for Festival Agreement). Legato is not responsible for any expenditure that is not agreed in advance with Legato in writing by the Board. Costs to meet the costs or your bid should be negotiated locally and will indicate governments support for your bid from the official tourism authority, business and local community.

5. Data, budgets, estimates and information should be reasonable, realistic, affordable and attainable.

6. Beyond the video presentation and bid document, any further marketing campaigns or promoting events to promote your bid must be approved by the Board in writing in advance of any other approaches to member choirs or individuals. (see appendix)

## Timeline for 2030 festival application

The Deadline for all applications is midnight CET on each date.

15 August 2023	Call for bids.
<b>1 December 2023</b>	Expressions of interest submissions due.
1 February 2024	Shortlist of applicants will be announced.
<b>1 July 2024</b>	Short listed Applicants to submit bid documents for initial assessment.
1 September 2024	Assessment of each bid given for final edit
<b>1 November 2024</b>	The final bid and video to be submitted.
1 January 2025	Legato members' choice open
1 February 2025	Legato members' choice closes
	Any additional consultation may take place or site visit notified
1 April 2025	The bidding teams will be advised about the 2030 host decision
Date – TBA	Formal announcement to members – Host for 2030 festival
2026	Handover ceremony in Brussels at Closing Ceremony

If you have any questions or require any clarification or support please get in touch with the Board: [variousvoices@legato-choirs.com](mailto:variousvoices@legato-choirs.com)

Submit applications by email to: [variousvoices@legato-choirs.com](mailto:variousvoices@legato-choirs.com)

Legato Board: August 2023

### Appendix available online at Legato website

[https://www.legato-choirs.com/various\\_Voices\\_2030](https://www.legato-choirs.com/various_Voices_2030)

- a. Stage 1 - Expression - Bid evaluation outline
- b. Stage 2 - Shortlist - Bid evaluation outline
- c. Simple Guide to Creating a Festival
- d. Example of a festival budget to use (a previous festival budget with figures is available on request)
- e. Economic Impact Studies
- f. Legato Various Voices Choir support for choirs
- g. Access and Inclusion Guidance
- h. Volunteer Charter example
- i. Promoting your Festival bid (Video Brief)
- j. Example festival evaluation
- k. Example VV Festival agreement
- l. Sample Draft Letter of Agreement