



Stages Guidelines 2025–2026

Welcome to the East Coast Music Association (ECMA) 2026 Stages submission guidelines. The East Coast Music Association presents over 30 stages and 100+ performances each year. Stage submissions are adjudicated by juries of qualified regional, national and international music industry professionals and peers.

Please review all guidelines before proceeding with your submission. Stages applicants are expected to be familiar with all guidelines.

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KEY DATES

Submission Period

September 2 to October 6, 2025

Eligibility Period

Music must be fully released between June 1, 2024 – Dec 31, 2026

Artist Selection

Artists selected for a performance will be contacted between November 2025 and February 2026.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Atlantic Canadian

Applicants must be Atlantic Canadian in accordance with the ECMA definition. In the case of a group, an artist listing may include the terms "vs" "&" or "featuring," however, at least 50% of group members must fulfill this eligibility criteria. This excludes any sampled or AI-generated music.

For awards and showcase purposes, Atlantic Canada is defined as New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. To be defined as Atlantic Canadian, a person must either be born in Atlantic Canada or have lived in Atlantic Canada for at least 12 months during the ECMA eligibility period. In the case of a group, at least 50% of members must be Atlantic Canadian. Cases where an Atlantic Canadian plays a primary leadership role in the project are eligible for consideration, subject to approval by the Awards & Stages Committee.

Atlantic Canadian Business: Candidates must reside and work in Atlantic Canada. In the case of a company, candidates must maintain an office and be a registered business in Atlantic Canada to be eligible.

ECMA Membership

Applicants must hold a membership in good standing with the East Coast Music Association. This means having an up-to-date ECMA membership, with no one in your group or party having had their membership revoked due to violations of the ECMA Code of Conduct.

Applicants who do not hold an active ECMA membership will be contacted to update their membership before being considered for an award nomination or stage opportunity. Note that a free ECMA membership is included in, and can be claimed by providing ECMA with proof of, membership with any of the following music industry associations:

EAST COAST MUSIC ASSOCIATION

- African Nova Scotian Music Association
- Cape Breton Music Industry Cooperative
- Music/Musique NB
- MusicNL
- Music Nova Scotia
- Music PEI

If you have any questions regarding your membership status, please log in to your account online or email us at hello@ecma.com.

Artist Activity

ECMA members must have a live set of at least 20 minutes of original music to apply for a festival stage performance. Artists can only participate in the Export program for two consecutive years before taking a year off.

Artists are required to release 3 songs within the eligibility period.

Eligibility Issues

Any eligibility-related issues shall be dealt with at the sole discretion of the ECMA Awards & Stages Committee. ECMA reserves the right to disqualify any applications that do not meet ECMA's Eligibility/Basic Requirements. Applicants whose submissions are disqualified or not accepted will not be notified.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Deadline

Submissions will be accepted from September 2, 2025 at 9:00 AM (ADT) to October 6, 2025 at 11:59 PM (ADT) at ecma.awardstage.com.

All submission requirements must be met at the time of submission. In the interest of fairness, incomplete or late applications will not be accepted.

Fees

Stage submissions are subject to an application fee of \$20 CAD.

Any application and membership fees associated with the application must be received for the application to be considered. Application fees are non-refundable.

Application fees will be waived for the first 48 hours of the submission period, from September 2, 2025 at 9:00 AM (ADT) to September 4, 2025 at 9:00 AM (ADT).

Use promo code First48 during this period to waive application fees.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

NOTE: There are separate applications for awards and showcase opportunities. To be considered for an award, please submit an Award Application.

Required Stages Information

1. Name of applicant to be considered for a stage
2. What region do they represent?
3. Lead contact information (name, role, phone number, email, address)
4. Promo photo (JPG, JPEG, PNG)
 - a. Please ensure your photo is landscape oriented, minimum of 300dpi, and labeled correctly with "Your Name". Photos that are not properly submitted will not be used.
5. List of band members (name, role, phone number, email)
6. Short Bio
7. Link to artist/group socials (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook etc.) or website
8. Describe performance/touring experience in the last two years
9. Options of formats (solo, duo, trio, full band)
10. Live performance footage (video link)
11. Link to music released within the eligibility period
12. Length of set
13. Stage plot (PDF only)
14. Do you wish to be considered for the Export Program?
15. Self identification information

Export Program Questions (if selected)

16. What is your main driver of revenue?
17. What areas do you wish to develop by participating in the Export program?
18. The Export Program requires significant organization and an increased investment of time. ECMA typically requires applicants to be supported by a team member or support person. Please describe your situation:
 - a. I have representation and will be bringing a member of my team (e.g. manager, booking agent) Please list name and role: _____
 - b. I am self-managed and am committed to managing my participation
 - c. I require a support person/mentor to be assigned to me

Jury Process

After an internal screening process, applications are juried by qualified regional, national, and/or international industry professionals and artists selected for their specific expertise across musical genres. ECMA aims to assemble juries that reflect the diversity of regions, communities and musical genres in Atlantic Canada.

Artists will be selected from the Stages Applications to participate in the Export Program. ECMA may make adjustments to the artist selection to ensure geographical, genre, and community representation.

- An internal curation process will follow to finalize programming decisions.
- During the jury process applicants are scored based on the following criteria:

Evaluation Criteria

Accomplishments, Marketing & Promotion	Does the artist/group have a strong online presence i.e. streaming platforms/website/social media? In reviewing the overall submission, does the group demonstrate a level of professional accomplishments? Does the artist/group have a "buzz" – what press have they generated?	15%
Artistic Merit / Presentation	Does the artist portray professionalism and authenticity in regards to their overall submission and their past live performances? With the complete submission package in mind, and a focus on music in particular, does this submission meet your standards of artistic excellence?	20%
Music & Lyrics	Is there a coherence and originality to the music and lyrics (if applicable) of the submission?	15%
Originality	How is this artist/group unique? Do they set themselves apart? What do they offer to differentiate themselves from other musicians?	15%
Touring, Performance Ability & Experience	Evaluate the artist's dedication and success in live performances, considering the frequency, scale, and geographical reach of tours. Assess their technical proficiency,	35%

	stage presence, and ability to engage and entertain audiences.	
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ECMA DEFINITIONS

For detailed definitions of terms for ECMA purposes, please visit:

www.ecma.com/ecma-definitions/