



Essence Festival of Culture 2024 Frequently Asked Questions

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GENERAL INFORMATION

- 1. When is the next Community Commerce Partner Connect Call?**
 - a. The next call is scheduled for Tuesday, January 23, 2024, at 3:00 pm ET.

- 2. When will the 2024 application be made available?**
 - a. The 2024 application opened on November 15th and will close on January 15, 2024 (updated). Notifications will be sent to companies selected to participate in SOKO MRKT at Festival 2024 starting early February 2024, and the full payment will be due on February 29, 2024. (Application link is <https://ems.essence.com/>.)

- 3. When will approvals be sent to approved vendors?**
 - a. The plan is to notify approved vendors in early 2024 (i.e., at least two weeks before the February 29, 2024 payment due date).

VENDOR COMMUNICATIONS

- 1. Will there be communication on Do's and Don'ts for vendors?**
 - a. Yes, the team will include guidelines and restrictions for vendors inside of the FAQs and the Partner Guide. It will also be communicated via the various channels available to vending partners.

- 2. Will there be daily communication sent to vendors summarizing what occurred the day before and a preview of exciting things happening that day?**
 - a. Yes, the team plans to share these updates via a dedicated Slack channel and the Festival app.
 - b. The team will explore this and other ways to incorporate better communication of important details and updates.
 - c. The Slack channel will also aid in sharing critical information.

VENDOR APPLICATION & TIERED PRICING

- 1. What are the 2024 vending fees? The new tiered pricing model provides you the opportunity to select "prime area" locations during registration.**
 - a. Tier 1:
 - i. 10x10 Gold: \$2,860
 - ii. 10x20 Gold: \$4,620
 - b. Tier 2:
 - i. 10x10 Orange: \$2,600
 - ii. 10x20 Orange: \$4,200



2. **Will we be allowed to purchase more than one booth in 2024?**
 - a. Double booths are available for purchase. (See #7 above.)
3. **Will vendors have the option on the application to select their booth size?**
 - a. Yes. (See #7 above.)
4. **Will there be options for payment installments for vending booth fees?**
 - a. As of now, there is no payment plan available.
 - b. The team will consider vendor payment dates and options since vendor applications and first payments are due right after the holiday season.
5. **Are deposits being accepted toward next year's vendor booth purchase?**
 - a. Not currently.
6. **Last year, I applied as a vending partner via the New Voices Family. Can I do the same this year?**
 - a. The New Voices Foundation (<https://newvoicesfoundation.org>) will not have a separate pricing tier for 2024. You can select that you are a New Voices Family member to receive any future benefits that might be developed for SOKO MRKT partners. Only **active** New Voices family members will be eligible to participate in special programs.

VENDOR BOOTH PLACEMENT AND SIZING

1. **How will vendors be placed within the Convention Center?**
 - a. The new tiered pricing model provides you the opportunity to select "prime area" locations during registration. The floor plan will be added to the EMS vendor portal once approved.
 - b. Placement will depend on the number of companies in each category and sub-category of products that are accepted into the program. The team endeavors to design a diverse retail environment via an assortment of companies and product offerings.
2. **Can vendors pay a fee to receive a corner booth?**
 - a. There is not an opportunity to select a corner booth.
3. **How will the layout of the show be handled differently to ensure an optimal amount of foot traffic through the marketplace?**
 - a. The 2024 Floorplan layout has been redesigned to improve sight lines and traffic flows.

4. Can we choose our booth location?
 - a. Booth location selection is not a feature that is enabled for 2024. The new tiered pricing model provides you the opportunity to select "prime area" locations during registration.
5. Are there any opportunities to work with the SOKO MRKT team on staging and set design?
 - a. If there is interest we can provide a list of potential companies that could partner with you on booth design and production.
6. Will vendors experience last-minute downsizing of booth sizes?
 - a. No, there will be no downsizing or last-minute booth changes in 2024. The team will be managing against the inventory that they have based on what vendors selected and paid for.
7. Will there be different signage with better visibility for booth names?
 - a. Booth positioning and location will be different in 2024. Visibility from the central aisle will be better, and traffic to booths will be easier. In terms of branding, the team is hoping to put together a directory to assist with vendor branding and promotion. There will also be branding/marketing resources on the soon-to-come SOKO MRKT site and, eventually, the Partner Guide to support vendors with marketing to their expected audience.
 - b. A FAQ document will be made available during vendor onboarding, and a live document that will include real-time questions and answers before and during the Festival.
8. Will there be improvements in booth placement and visibility in terms of placement of corporate sponsors and SOKO MRKT vendors?
 - a. Yes. The current plan is to shift the marketplace to a more central location between the two main entrance experiences to capture attendees as they enter the convention center.
 - b. New tiered pricing will include selecting areas nearer the entrances and corporate sponsors.
 - a. The layout will be set up in a way where no booth will face a wall but instead face the aisles and sit closer so that there are no dead zones.
9. How can I ensure placement in a location with a lot of traffic?
 - a. The new tiered pricing model provides you the opportunity to select "prime area" locations during registration.
10. How do I ensure I am in a space relevant to what I am selling?
 - a. In the application, please indicate the sub-category and ensure you are providing details on the products you are planning to sell in SOKO MRKT. You also have an opportunity in the application to provide any additional information.
11. Are there any height restrictions on items held in the booth?
 - a. The height of the booth is the restriction – for safety, no item should sit above the
 - b. frame system of the booth- 88” for the back panel.

12. Will custom signage/banners be allowed for booths?
 - a. A graphic header with the company name will be provided by the event and must be in place for consistency with our festival creative/brand. Custom decoration and banners inside the booths themselves are permitted - as long as they fit within the dimensions of the space and do not extend to the exterior of the booth specs. RPM, the exhibitor services company, can also produce any booth signage for vendors, which can be requested in the Partner kits that are provided upon contract and payment confirmation.

ONSITE LOGISTICS (LOAD-IN, LOAD-OUT)

1. Has the team revisited the load-out process for 2024?
 - a. Yes, the load-out process and timeline will be revisited for 2024. A better communication plan will be put into place, and vendors will be encouraged to stick to their given time window to load out. The team will also partner with RPM on a more straightforward process for all parties onsite.
 - b. When will companies be able to move into the SOKO MRKT?
 - c. July 3rd and 4th (keep in mind that moving in on the 4th will incur labor rates up to 1.5x).
2. Will the team's contact information be available for questions or concerns (i.e., WiFi password, etc.)?
 - a. Essential information like WiFi code and password will be available during onboarding and onsite via multiple communication channels for reference. SOKO MRKT Ambassadors will be available to answer questions onsite.
 - b. A Slack channel will be created for real-time communication between the Essence team and SOKO MRKT vendors.

INSURANCE

1. Do vendors need to have workers' compensation insurance year-round?
 - a. Vendors will need to provide proof of workers' compensation, at least for the period of the event. Vendors must be responsible and liable for any personnel utilized to staff their booths, even if staffing is a volunteer.
 - b. Essence does require workers comp insurance, but we understand not all of our vendors may not carry a standard workers comp policy. In those instances, our insurance contact can work with you to identify coverage right for you and your involvement at our event. Our insurance contact is Tom Dougherty (tdougherty@jafinsurance.com).

OTHER FESTIVAL OPPORTUNITIES

1. Will there be opportunities for the vendors to speak on the SOKO MRKT stage?



- a. Yes, there will be **limited** opportunities for vendors to promote their businesses on the SOKO MRKT stage. Note that there will be criteria for vendors in order to unlock the opportunity.
2. Will attendees see vendor locations on the festival app?
 - a. Yes, the plan is to have a vendor directory for attendees.
 - b. There will also be better signage on each aisle of the marketplace.
 3. Are there plans to create an accelerator around the Market?
 - a. There is no formal program currently in the plan. Through the Community Commerce Connects, New Voices programs, and the monthly SOKO MRKT newsletter, we plan to support our partners throughout the year leading up to, during, and post-FOC. We are also building year-round revenue and marketing opportunities for our SOKO MRKT partners.

