

Unit 102: Site-Specific Performance

Unit code:	M/502/5365
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to enable learners to make a performance piece in response to a particular location, building and/or environment. This unit focuses the application of devising, designing, performing, administrative and/or production skills on the creation of work for non-conventional performance spaces.

● Unit introduction

This unit provides the opportunity for learners to be involved in the making and presenting of a performance work specifically designed to take place in a non-traditional performance space. This can include both outdoor and indoor performances but the nature of the work will be a response to the environment in which it is taking place. There are a number of UK performance companies that specialise in this type of work, such as Stan's Cafe (Birmingham based), Grid Iron (Edinburgh based) and Red Earth (Brighton based).

A site specific performance aims to explore the possibilities of a particular place, space or building and use the particular qualities of the environment as an integral part of the work. The choice of site for a site-specific performance presents all sorts of challenges in terms of access, the audience/performer relationship and the scale of the work, all of which add to the work's artistic potential. Possible sites might include railway arches, hotel rooms, a telephone box, a wooded glade, a graveyard or on board a ship. The one thing that site-specific performance is not is theatre on a conventional stage in a building built for that specific purpose.

The type of work can be original or it might be based on a text. Genet's Maids, for example, has been staged in an actual hotel room. The work can take any form and be in any genre. It can use any number of different elements such as music, lighting, props, puppets, physical theatre, dance or projections. The overriding feature of site specific performance is that it should fully exploit the possibilities of the selected site so that there is an integral relationship between the content of the work and the space in which the performance is taking place.

It should be noted that any site that is being considered for use as a performance site needs to be fully risk assessed. In all cases, the consent of the land or property owner must be secured and any necessary permissions must be sought eg road closures.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know the nature of site-specific performance as an art form
- 2 Know the legislative requirements related to a site-specific performance
- 3 Be able to research and contribute ideas in the development process of a site-specific performance
- 4 Be able to undertake a role in a site-specific performance.

Unit content

1 Know the nature of site-specific performance as an art form

Context: history and cultural backgrounds of outdoor installation and performance; companies eg Welfare State International, The Natural Theatre Company, Richard Schechner, Bread and Puppet Theater [sic], Emergency Exit Arts, Punchdrunk, Groundlings, Bubble, KneeHigh; understanding terminologies eg site-specific, landscape, environmental, ritual, celebration, ceremony; cultural context

Concept: examining the 'whys?' and 'whats?' of creating site-specific work; considering the relationship between the 'natural' space and performance; allowing the environment to speak for itself; logistics eg the vision versus the practicality of an idea; how an environment lends itself to performance; how the site specific performance differs from performance art or installation work; utilising the natural and architectural environment eg adding to, altering, incorporating, obscuring; the nature of the audience and the work eg paying/non-paying, elitist or communal, sitting/standing/moving, participating or non-participatory

2 Know the legislative requirements related to a site-specific performance

Planning: selecting the site; surveying the site; confirming site ownership; securing written permission (in some cases this may be contractual); producing drawings showing access to the site; carrying out risk assessments (for performers and the public; in general related to the space and in particular related to the nature of the activities); gaining necessary permissions eg local authority consent, meeting fire safety requirements; meeting other legislative requirements eg public health (access to adequate toilet and washing facilities; electrical installation (where increased electrical supply is required for indoor or outdoor events)

Legislation: licensing requirements for using premises or outdoor spaces for performance eg The Licensing Act (2003)); requirement to prevent crime and disorder; ensure public safety; prevent public nuisance; protect children (defined as under 18 in the UK) from harm; Temporary Events Notice (TEN) with Local Authority; Health and Safety at Work Act (1974); contracts eg between premises and performers for hire costs and to secure booking; insurance cover eg public liability

3 Be able to research and contribute ideas in the development process of a site-specific performance

Research: primary research eg visual and/or written diary of the location/site, interviews with individuals with first-hand knowledge/memories of the site, review of original documentation related to the site; secondary research eg material related to the site or similar locations, other written, photographic or recorded material

Ideas: exploring the use of different creative techniques in the landscape eg image, sound, physical performance, costumes, using different materials, lighting; exploring different environments as a way of understanding the use of space; using research findings (visual, oral, aural, historical, work of other artists in other media) to stimulate, inform and extend creative ideas; collaborating in the creation process eg improvising, writing, devising, designing, making, choreographing, composing, directing, facilitating, crafting, filming, editing

4 Be able to undertake a role in a site-specific performance

Role: application of skills relevant to role or roles undertaken eg acting, singing, dancing, designing, making, playing an instrument, technical set-up and operation, stage management, production management; communication skills related to role or roles eg between performers, to the audience, between different departments, clarifying instructions, negotiating, use of appropriate language and terminology, oral and written communication, use of telephone, email correspondence, letter writing

Performance: artistic requirements eg meeting the original brief or intention; matching the overall concept of the piece; technical requirements eg accuracy of applying skills; consistency of using skills; professional requirements eg meeting deadlines; collaborative working; task completion; focus on continual improvement

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 outline the nature of site-specific performance, with some examples [IE]	M1 explain the nature of site-specific performance, with reference to relevant examples	D1 analyse the nature of site-specific performance, supported with well-chosen examples
P2 carry out a risk assessment of the selected site with support and guidance	M2 carry out a risk assessment of the selected site with minimal support and guidance	D2 carry out a risk assessment of the selected site autonomously
P3 list the conditions of use and any restrictions imposed on the use of the site	M3 list the conditions of use and explain why these and any restrictions on the use of the site have been imposed	D3 produce a detailed analysis of the conditions and any restrictions that apply to the usage of the site
P4 provide workable ideas and suitable research findings [IE, CT]	M4 provide ideas and research findings that are mostly an appropriate and creative response to the site-specific requirements of the project	D4 provide consistently detailed and appropriate ideas and research findings that are a positive and creative response to the site-specific requirements of the project
P5 use appropriate skills competently to produce actions associated with the role that make a useful contribution to the work. [SM]	M5 use appropriate skills confidently so that the actions associated with the role during the site-specific performance make some impact on the effectiveness of the work.	D5 use skills imaginatively and with considerable attention to detail so that the actions associated with the role during the site-specific performance make a notable impact upon the overall quality of the work.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers CT – creative thinkers	RL – reflective learners TW – team workers	SM – self-managers EP – effective participators
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Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

This unit introduces learners to the emerging practice of site-specific performance and is an opportunity to explore ways of creating a performance piece in response to an identified place. The nature of the work will necessarily be experimental and should extend beyond the idea of simply staging a play in unusual spaces. Whilst outdoor productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, could be considered to be site specific performances, they are at the conventional end of the spectrum. The spirit of this unit is about encouraging learners to devise and create work that is an artistic response to the chosen environment. The starting point for delivery is to look at examples of companies and practitioners working within the field of site specific performance. Visiting galleries or sculpture parks that specialise in installation work is also a good starting point for discussion work and as a stimulus for ideas. The exploration of possible spaces for performance is another key starting point to the work. This could begin with a reconnaissance of the learners' own centre, both internally and externally. The important focus learners must have is to imagine the performance potential of any space in terms of both responding to it and interacting with it. Site-specific performance should be at its heart a two-way process: how will the work being created enhance the environment in which it is to be placed and how will the environment make an aesthetic contribution to the work? These two considerations need to be at the centre of learners' thinking as they develop and research ideas and made decisions about the nature of the site they are going to work in.

The amount of freedom that tutors are able to give learners both in the choice of site and in the nature of the performance work to be created will depend upon the experience and maturity of the learners. Due consideration should to be given to the size and scale of the project in terms of learner numbers and budget. It is strongly recommended that centres provide some sort of commissioning brief for learners that will provide a framework for the development of their ideas, the choice of location and the nature and content of the final outcome. For example, the commission might be that a local factory has a disused warehouse that it is prepared to make available for a performance or a developer is prepared to allow a performance to take place in a 1930s hotel they have just acquired before it is converted into apartments.

Any practitioner working in this field needs to be fully aware of the legal and health and safety requirements associated with creating a site specific performance. It is advisable for tutors to establish a good working relationship with the local authority as they can provide the appropriate information and, in many cases it is the local authority that will provide the permission or a licence to carry out a site specific performance. It is a good idea to cover the health and safety aspects of the unit first so that learners are able to test their creative ideas against the reality of being able to achieve them both practically and safely. Learners must consider the potential risks to performers and the audience and show that they have taken every possible step to reduce any risk to the absolute minimum. Learners need to recognise that in order to satisfy health and safety requirements artistic intentions and ideas may need to be modified to make them achievable. For example, working in a rural location without mains water and sewage supply and mains electricity will require the use of generators and the hiring of portable toilets: how will this be achieved within budget to meet health and safety requirements?

Unlike many of the other performance units, this unit enables learners to take on a role that is relevant to the work: this need not be a performing role. In any case, the nature of 'performing' and 'acting' in the context of site specific performance is far removed from that of conventional theatre or plays. Some learners may focus more on the visual and aural elements of performance and take on a non-performing role such as composer, choreographer, designer or prop maker. This is why learning outcomes 3 and 4 are expressed generically. Equally, the work may be entirely collaborative and individuals may share and mix roles in order to make the work happen: the important thing is that learners are credited with their overall contribution and that contribution is identified as being their own work. It is also possible for the tutor to be in the role of director or facilitator and the leader of the company if this is a preferred way of working.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to the unit and proposed assignments.
Attendance at lectures on the development and cultural context of site-specific performance.
Personal research investigating the nature of Site Specific Performance and preparation for own seminar presentation on an aspect of Site Specific Performance.
Assignment 1: What is Site-specific Performance? (P1, M1, D1)
Five minute presentation of own seminar presentation on an aspect of site-specific performance and contribution to group discussion. Write up of conclusions from own and other's seminar presentations.
Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on health and safety risk assessment procedure • by visiting speaker from the local council on making an application to put on an event • from the local National Trust office on NT properties that have the possibility for use as a performance space • by local commercial estate agent on spaces in the locality that could be available for site specific performances.
Assignment 2: Risk and Legals (P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3)
Attendance at discussion group meeting looking at proposed and suggested sites for performance.
Allocation of site surveys to small teams.
Carry out research into allocated site.
Determine ownership and follow through discussions on usage.
Carry out risk assessment and produce documentation.
Present case and outline artistic potential for allocated site.
Make final decisions about which site or sites to use.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

Assignment 3: Devising a Site-specific Performance Piece (P4, M4, D4)

Responding to the site.

Working out initial response to the environment and allocating research and development tasks.

Deciding on role or roles: agreeing targets for bringing ideas to the table.

Attending workshop sessions to work through ideas.

Shaping ideas and confirming individual and collective contributions to the project.

Working to project plan and individual deadlines.

Attending, leading, running and contributing to workshops, rehearsals, meetings as required.

Fixing the final artistic decisions; 'getting in' on site, setting up and making final performance preparations.

Assignment 4: Making a Site-specific Performance Piece (P5, M5, D5)

Taking part in a site-specific performance and reviewing the audiences' reaction to the work.

Topic and suggested activities and/or assessment.

Assessment

There are essentially **four** aspects to the assessment of work for this unit:

- demonstrating a contextual and conceptual understanding of site-specific performance
- carrying out a risk assessment and knowing the legal constraints associated with the site
- researching and contributing suitable ideas for a site specific work
- making a site-specific performance.

Learners are required to show some contextual and conceptual knowledge and understanding of site specific performance and this can be captured through a written research project or a visual and aural presentation, or a combination of both. A standard risk assessment pro forma may be used by all learners but it must be completed accurately. The legal conditions and restrictions must be recorded correctly by all learners to demonstrate that they are aware of what they are. There needs to be evidence of the research carried out and the contributions made to the development of ideas. This then should extend into an account of the individual's role in the preparation, rehearsal and presentation of the final piece of work. Learners will be able to record aspects of the development process in a logbook or sketchbook and this might include DVD extracts of a rehearsal or workshop as well as trained observer notes. The log should also record artistic and practical decisions that are made in the making of the site specific performance. It is also a good idea for there to be a collective statement about the artistic intentions of the piece and an evaluation of the extent to which the final outcome has met these intentions. It should be remembered that an individual's involvement in the actual performance can be quite minimal, especially if they have taken on roles such as costume designer and maker or composer and sound designer.

Learning outcome 1 requires learners to demonstrate their understanding of the nature of site specific performance. Differentiation between pass, merit and distinction will be apparent through the depth of understanding that is shown. Learners will need to articulate their understanding in written and/or oral form, so it will be necessary for them to produce some kind of report (which can be written or recorded on DVD, or a combination of the two) that will enable them to talk and/or write about what they have understood about different kinds of site specific performance.

For P1, learners will be able to describe site specific performance with examples but there will be little justification given which explains how or why they have selected these particular examples. There will be little evidence of learners having read or researched beyond the examples provided by the tutor.

For M1, learners will be able to explain site specific performance and provide examples that demonstrate some of the diversity of work under this banner. There will be some attempt at personal insight and an explanation given as to why the particular companies chosen might be considered important examples.

For D1, learners will be able to present a well thought out definition of site specific performance based on their analysis of three or four contrasting companies. Distinction level work will be characterised by the use of comparison between different types of work in this area and a sense of curiosity illustrated by the extent and detail of the work. Distinction level learners will be able to communicate their understanding using the appropriate language and terminology confidently and accurately.

Learning outcome 2 requires learners to know about the legal requirements that any site specific performance needs to meet. These are broadly in respect of health and safety legislation (grading criterion 2) and licensing requirements for public events (grading criterion 3). Each learner must be made aware of any potential risks associated with the site and the proposed activities that they are going to take part in. Each learner should carry out a risk assessment from the point of view of their own role in the project. A learner engaging in an activity that involves 'flying on wires', for example, is going to be more at risk than an individual sitting in a chair and the learner must show their awareness of the risks associated with different activities. For GC2 differentiation between pass, merit and distinction will be apparent through the level of autonomy learners are able to demonstrate in the way they complete the risk assessment. For GC3 differentiation will be achieved through the way in which learners are able to show their level of understanding or the reasons underlying the conditions/restrictions required by the licensing authority or land/property owner. The sources of evidence for this outcome will be through the completion of the required documentation and reports and the extent to which the tutor has had to support the learner in completing these accurately.

For P2 and P3, learners will require careful monitoring and close supervision in order to ensure that the risk assessment is carried out accurately. The report on conditions/restrictions will be little more than a repeat of the information provided by the licensing authority and/or landlord. Learners will benefit from the tutor prompting them with appropriate questions related to the risk assessment and list of conditions/restrictions. Learners in this category will require some support in organising their documentation and presenting it coherently.

For M2 and M3, learners will be relatively independent and eager to complete the risk assessment accurately and in an informed and purposeful way. The tutor may need to set some targets in order for the work to be completed, but once agreed they will be met. Learners will be keen to seek tutor feedback and will use this to modify their documentation. Learners at merit level will be able to articulate some of the reasons underlying the list of conditions/restrictions they produce.

For D2 and D3, learners will be confident and organised enough to manage these tasks with very little input from the tutor. Learners will be able to fully explain the reasoning underlying any conditions or restrictions imposed on the production by the licensing authority or landlord even if they do not entirely agree with them.

Learning outcome 3 requires learners to demonstrate their ability to contribute ideas and carry appropriate and relevant research that will form part of the development process of the work. The nature of the ideas and the research will depend to some extent on the role undertaken in the project, but it should inform the content and structure of the final piece. There will be some overlap with the evidence created for learning outcome 4 and the tutor will have to make a judgement about how the evidence is balanced between these two interwoven outcomes. Differentiation between pass, merit and distinction will be evident through the tutor's (or tutors') judgement of how engaged learners are in the creative process and the quality of their responses to the project.

For P4, learners will produce ideas and present research findings that make some useful contribution to the development process. However, there will be a sense in which the ideas are not entirely compatible with the way the work is going or entirely in tune with the nature of the work. Pass level learners will tend to use their time ineffectually and will require some coaxing by other members of the group and/or by the tutor.

For M4, learners will be able to focus and concentrate on ensuring that the ideas they produce and the research they present are worked through fully and are open to make changes and compromises where necessary. Merit learners will make every effort to ensure that their contribution is positive and appropriate. There will be very few, if any, issues with regard to time management.

For D4, learners will be able to focus fully on producing ideas and presenting research findings that move the project forward. They bring ideas and research findings to the project which are thought provoking and often inspiring. Distinction level learners will bring ideas and research findings to the project that have an influential effect on the shape, content and structure of the work and will be able to exploit its creative and artistic possibilities fully.

Learning outcome 4 requires learners to demonstrate their effectiveness in the application of the necessary skills in a role within a site specific performance. Differentiation between pass, merit and distinction will be evident through the tutor's judgement and peer feedback on the quality of the learner's work and contribution to the project. The types of role or roles that can be undertaken in a site specific performance are many and varied and the tutor will need to make a judgement in relation to the set of skills that each learner has applied within the project. For this reason, it is advisable to draw up a role specification for each learner which lists the actions and tasks that are required for their individual role(s).

For P5, learners will apply skills competently and produce work that is functional and does the job. A pass level learner will have done what is asked of them and carried out the essential requirements of the role.

For M5, learners will apply skills in a way which demonstrates technical security and some inventiveness. A merit learner will have made some memorable or notable contributions to the success of the project.

For D5, learners will have an unmistakable confidence in everything they do in relation to the project. Distinction level learners will have a complete sense of ease in the application of skills and a commitment to the project that is demonstrated through their almost relentless energy and passion for the work.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1	What is Site-specific Performance?	After a series of seminars examining the nature of site-specific performance, carry out research on chosen topic (eg 'Compare and contrast the work of two site specific performance companies'; 'What is the difference between installation art and site-specific performance?'; 'How does a physical space inform and suggest a performance piece?').	Presentation or written project on chosen aspect of site-specific performance.
P2, M2, D2 P3, M3, D3	Risk and Legals	Attending a series of presentations, talks and workshops on health and safety and performance licensing. Producing a risk assessment of the selected site. Taking part in negotiations with regard to the use of the site and agreeing conditions of use.	Risk assessment report and documentation relating to licensing and consents with a written commentary.
P4, M4, D4	Devising a Site-specific Performance Piece		Portfolio of evidence that might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> research notes and findings; an account of own contribution to the development of the project; tutor observation report; sketches, photographs, DVD diary, drawings, drafts of scripts, meeting notes.
P5, M5, D5	Making a Site-specific Performance Piece	Applying skills in a role or roles that make a contribution to the final 'performance'.	Some of the evidence will be contained in the portfolio for P4, M4 and D4 (eg sketches, how ideas have been developed and refined); additionally a record of the performance on DVD and/or photographic; tutor observation report.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Preparing Performing Arts Work	The Development of Drama	Performance Workshop
	The Development of Dance	Performing to an Audience
	The Development of Music	

This unit also has links with the following National Occupational Standards:

Live Events and Promotion

- LE3 – Support the licensing and permissions application process for a live event
- LE6 – Support the planning of live events
- LE11 – Research and assess the appropriateness of different types of venues for different types of live events

Technical Theatre

- HS2 – Assessing risks.

Essential resources

The main resource for this unit is the geographical or architectural location for which the site-specific performance work is going to be developed. The additional resources needed are those to be identified within a given budget. The nature of those resources will depend upon the direction the site-specific performance work takes.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

The nature of site-specific performance is that it often develops from a commission related to a location or building. Learners may therefore find themselves responding to a client brief which will require them to work with an employer. In addition, site-specific work is a community-oriented way of working and learners will find themselves working with different agencies and engaging with the general public.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Avram C et al – *In Situ: Voyages D'Artistes Européens* (Editions L'Entretemps, 2006) ISBN 9782912877536
(NB: text is in French)

Ayres N – *Creating Outdoor Theatre: A Practical Guide* (Crowood, 2008) ISBN 9781847970459

Barba E – *The Paper Canoe: A Guide to Theatre Anthropology* (Routledge, 1994) ISBN 9780415116749

Barba E and Savarese N – *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* (Routledge, 2005) ISBN 9780415378611

Coult T and Kershaw B – *Engineers of the Imagination: The Welfare State Handbook* (Methuen, 1983)
ISBN 9780413528001

Ehrenreich B – *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy* (Granta, 2007) ISBN 9781862079540

Fox J – *Eyes on Stalks* (Methuen, 2002) ISBN 9780413761903

Hill L and Paris H (editors) – *Performance and Place* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) ISBN 9781403945044

Kwon M – *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Location Identity* (MIT Press, 2002)
ISBN 9780262612029

Mason B – *Street Theatre and Other Outdoor Performance* (Routledge, 1992) ISBN 9780415070508

Mau B and Rockwell D – *Spectacle* (Phaidon, 2006) ISBN 9780714845746

Tufnell M and Crickmay C – *Body Space Image* (Virago 2008) ISBN 9781852730413

Websites

www.dreamthinkspeak.com

Dreamthinkspeak performance company

www.eea.org.uk

Emergency Exit Arts company

www.gridiron.org.uk

Grid Iron theatre company

www.naturaltheatre.co.uk

Natural Theatre company

www.redearth.co.uk

environmental arts group

www.scottisharts.org.uk

links to site-specific theatre archives

www.stanscafe.co.uk

Education resource site

www.streetartsnetwork.org.uk

Street Arts Network site

www.thethingis.co.uk

cultural commentary with site-specific theatre links

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	researching the nature of site-specific performance researching material that might inform own site-specific performance work
Creative thinkers	creating and devising material for a site-specific performance
Self-managers	setting targets to complete tasks related to the making of a site-specific performance.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Use ICT systems	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	researching material about site specific performance companies
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	researching material for use in the making of a site specific performance work
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	researching material for use in the making of a site specific performance work
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	completing a risk assessment for a site specific performance
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	contributing to discussions about ideas for material for a site specific performance work
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	using a range of written sources to provide a contextual and conceptual background to site specific performance work
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	writing scripts, outlines, proposals, presentations related to the site specific performance.