

Artistic Assembly Terms of Reference (in plain English)

Being part of a Candoco Assembly

Candoco makes artistic decisions through groups called Artistic Assemblies. This is a shared way of working, instead of having all decisions made by one Artistic Director. It is designed to be clear, fair, and accountable.

Different decisions are handled in different ways, depending on how big they are, the level of risk, and their impact. Some decisions are fully made by the Assembly, while others are shared with senior leadership. Board members are not part of Assemblies, so governance and artistic decision-making stay separate.

Assemblies are built around disabled-led decision-making. They recognise that creative leadership can be shared, while still keeping clear responsibility. Not all decisions carry the same weight, so there are two levels of decision-making:

Level 1 – Delegated decisions

The Assembly makes the final decision within an agreed brief.

This might include:

- Choosing artists for commissions or programmes
- Agreeing themes or priorities within an existing plan
- Selecting work for specific programmes
- These Assemblies are set up for a specific purpose and time period. A Candoco staff member is always part of the group.

Level 2 – Shared decisions

For bigger decisions with long-term, financial, or reputational impact, the Assembly shares responsibility with the Executive Director.

This might include:

- Major partnerships
- Large-scale or long-term commissions
- Both the Executive Director and a Candoco staff lead are part of these Assemblies.

How Assemblies work

Each Assembly agrees how they will work together at the start. This includes expectations around respect, listening, confidentiality, and accountability. It also recognises that people have different experiences and access needs, and aims to make space for all voices. A facilitator will support Assemblies at the beginning. Over time, the aim is for groups to run themselves.

Assemblies use a simple checklist to guide decisions and make sure they align with Candoco's curatorial approach and budget. Members must declare any conflicts of interest.

The group will try to reach agreement through discussion. If this is not possible, a simple majority vote is used. Assemblies should have an odd number of people to avoid tied decisions.

Each Assembly appoints a chair, although this role may become unnecessary as groups become more self-managing.

Safeguards and accountability

All meetings are recorded through formal minutes. These include:

- What level of decision-making the Assembly is using
- The decisions made and how they were reached
- The reasons behind decisions
- Any conflicts of interest and how they were handled
- Who attended, including confirmation that representation requirements were met
- Any decisions that were delayed and why
- Minutes are checked and approved by the group and stored by Candoco to ensure transparency and consistency.

Membership and representation

Assemblies bring together a mix of people depending on the decision. This can include artists, Candoco staff, curators, producers, partners, and others.

Membership is flexible and changes depending on what is needed.

All external participants are paid, and access costs are covered.

Candoco understands disability as self-defined and shaped by different lived experiences.

A least 75% of Assembly members will have lived experience of disability. This requirement will be monitored at the point the Assembly is convened.

To support this, Assembly members are invited, on an optional and confidential basis, to indicate whether they identify as a D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent person or as having lived experience of disability. This information is used solely for the purposes of Assembly composition. No individual is required to disclose publicly, and disclosure does not affect an individual's value, contribution, or role within the Assembly.