Aretas

Fitness competition budget: what it costs and how to price it

An entry price picked first, from what other events charge, is how a competition sells out and still loses money. This guide works the other way round: list what the day costs, take off what sponsors cover, and divide what is left by the places you expect to sell. It goes through every line of the budget, which lines can cost you nothing, and when early bird pricing, team pricing, spectator tickets, deposits and extras are worth it.

It uses the example every Team Aretas resource uses: **120 athletes, 8 lanes, one day**, from the crew arriving at 06:30 to the venue clear at 22:00.

By Steven Batchelor · Last updated 28 October 2026 · 14 min read

The short answer

- **Price from the budget, not from other events.** Your costs, minus what sponsors cover, divided by the places you expect to sell, plus a margin.
- **Budget for 80% full, not 100%.** For 120 places that is 96 athletes.
- **Breaking even is a good first event.** Plan a year of competitions, and make the profit across the year rather than on day one.

The worked example

The event is the one the other guides use:

- **120 places**, individuals, in six categories: Rx, scaled and masters, for men and women.
- **One day**: crew in at 06:30, doors at 08:00, last heat finishing at 19:40, awards at 20:15, the venue clear by 22:00.
- **17 people on the day**: 8 lane judges, a head judge, a heat marshal, 2 floor crew, a score desk, 2 at check-in, an MC and first aid. That becomes 27 with two crews of judges and two spare judges.
- **The kit for 8 lanes**: 24 wall balls (9, 6 and 4 kg) and 8 targets, 8 boxes, 18 barbells with plates, an 8-station pull-up rig and a clock.

This guide adds one number: **96 places sold**. That is 80% of the 120, and it is the number to divide your costs by.

Why not 120? Because full is the exception, not the rule. Budget for 96, and every athlete after the 96th is margin rather than the thing that rescues the event.

How the price comes out of the budget

Work it in four steps:

1. **List every cost**, using the sections below.
2. **Take off what sponsors will cover**, in cash or in product.
3. **Divide what is left by 96**, the places you expect to sell.
4. **Add a margin** for the costs you have not thought of yet.

Every cost is shared by the athletes who pay, so it helps to see what one line adds to each entry. At 96 places, each £100 of cost adds £1.04 to the price an athlete has to pay for you to break even:

A cost of	Adds to each entry at 120 places	Adds to each entry at 96 places
£100	£0.83	£1.04
£500, a photographer for the day	£4.17	£5.21
£1,500, a well-known photographer and DJ	£12.50	£15.63

The same table works the other way for sponsors: every £100 a sponsor pays takes £1.04 off the break-even price.

What pricing for a full event costs you

If you set the price so that 120 entries cover the costs, and you sell 96, you collect 80% of what the day costs and are a fifth short. Pricing for 96 instead means a price 25% higher than the full-event price (120 ÷ 96 = 1.25). That gap is the whole reason to budget for the places you expect rather than the places you have.

Withdrawals

Plan for a few athletes to withdraw. One in ten would be high for an event this size, but write your refund policy before entries open and price with it in mind: a refund you have promised is a cost, and one you have not promised is an argument.

Every line of the budget

Most lines below can cost you very little, or nothing, if you run the event in your own gym and ask for the right things in kind. The ones that nearly always cost money are a professional venue, first aid, insurance, and the people who work for a day rate: the head judge, the MC, a DJ and a photographer.

The venue

The venue is usually the biggest single cost, and it depends almost entirely on where you run the event:

- **Your own gym** costs little or nothing extra. You are already paying for the coaches, the power and the heating.
- **A council sports hall or a running track** can be cheap.
- **A professional event venue** costs far more, and city prices, London above all, are a different scale again.

Three things catch organisers out:

- **You may be paying for three days, not one.** A professional venue charges for the day before to set up and the day after to pack down, usually at a reduced day rate.
- **Check what is not included.** Every venue is different, so ask for a list of what you get: tables and chairs, power, a sound system, cleaning, car parking, and wifi, which is easy to assume and often extra.
- **Ask how it is priced and when you pay**: by the hour, the day or as a package, and whether there is a deposit and when it is due. Put the deposit date in your budget, because it is often due before a single entry has come in.

Equipment

Start with what you already own. A functional fitness gym usually has at least two of every piece of kit its classes use, and a gym built around hybrid racing has at least two of what it uses, but may have no barbells at all. Running 8 lanes means 8 of everything, so the rest has to come from somewhere:

- **Borrow from other gyms**, often in return for places or a mention.
- **Hire from other organisers** who rent out their own kit.
- **Hire from equipment makers**, such as Concept2 for ergs.

Protect the floor. Dropped barbells and wall balls damage a sports hall floor, and repairing one costs more than the matting or platforms that prevent it, so budget for floor protection wherever you are not in your own gym.

Chalk and tape are not your cost. Tell athletes to bring their own.

Judges and crew

Almost every judge at an event this size is a volunteer. Some are offered travel or accommodation, but that is not common. The **head judge** is the exception: they are usually paid, or at least have their travel and accommodation covered.

Volunteers still cost something, in kind. What you give depends on the size of the event:

Event	What volunteers usually get
Most events	Food, drink and a T-shirt, as a minimum
Larger events	A hoodie and shorts as well
The biggest events	Trainers and a gym bag with several T-shirts

The rest of the crew works the same way: the heat marshal, floor crew, score desk and check-in usually volunteer on the same terms. The **MC, a DJ and the photographer** are normally paid a day rate. A photographer costs about £500 for the day; a well-known photographer and DJ together can come close to £1,500.

Water and food are worth thinking about rather than buying by reflex. Bottled water is what most events hand out, but it is expensive and wasteful: at about 2 litres a person over a 15-hour day, 27 people get through 54 litres in bottles, many of them half drunk. A water tap and a request that everyone brings a reusable bottle costs nothing, and a bottle with a sponsor's name on it is something a sponsor will pay for. Food is just as easy to have sponsored, or to make part of the deal with a food vendor who wants to trade on the day.

Recruiting and training judges covers how many judges you need and how to look after them.

First aid

At the very least, have a trained first aider on site for the whole day. Larger events book a private ambulance crew from a provider such as St John Ambulance. Ask for a quote early, because the date matters as much as the price: event medical cover gets booked up in the busy months.

Insurance

Check what you already have before you buy anything:

1. **Ask the venue** what insurance it requires of you, and at what level of cover.
2. **Check your gym's own policy.** Some cover a public competition; many do not. Ask your insurer directly rather than reading the policy and hoping.
3. **If neither covers it, buy an event policy** for the day, with public liability at the level the venue asks for. Your gym business's level is a sensible guide.

A teens category changes a lot. Anyone working with under-18s needs to be checked to work with

children: a DBS check in England and Wales, PVG in Scotland and AccessNI in Northern Ireland. Check that your insurance covers under-18s too, and think hard about whether the first event is the one to add teens to.

Medals and prizes

Leave both out of the first budget, and add them back only when a sponsor pays for them:

- **Medals** are not expected at an event this size, and many good competitions do without them.
- **Cash prize money** is not expected either. It turns a fun day into a contest for money, and it is a cost you carry whether or not the event fills.
- **Prizes in product are the sponsor's job.** Brands want their product in the hands of the people who buy it, so prizes are the line a sponsor is most likely to cover.

Photography, music and screens

- **A photographer** costs about £500 for the day. The photos sell next year's event, so this is one of the last costs to cut.
- **Music**: ask the venue whether its music licence (PPL PRS) covers a public event, or whether you need one of your own.
- **A screen, a sound system and a clock** are all needed. Your gym probably has them already; if not, add them to the hire list. The screen is where the live leaderboard goes, so athletes and spectators can follow the scores between heats.

Printing and signage

Banners, lane numbers, score sheets and posters are all needed. A print service that specialises in events, such as Defiant Print Services, can do the lot.

T-shirts and goodie bags

These are not expected, so they do not belong in the cost of an entry. Sell an event T-shirt instead, through a print-on-demand service so you hold no stock, and expect to sell a few rather than many.

Marketing

Do not start with paid adverts. Build a following for the competition on social media first: announce the date, show the venue, reveal the workouts, share athletes' posts. When you do run adverts, they cost less and work better, because Facebook and Google already know who your audience is. How to sell out a fitness competition has the plan, week by week.

Card and platform fees

Know how the platform you sell entries through is paid, and whether its fees come out of your entry price or are added to the athlete's total. On Team Aretas you pay a fixed price for your plan, not a fee per athlete, and a processing fee is added to the athlete's total at checkout, so you receive the full entry price.

VAT

Talk to your accountant. Whether VAT applies depends on your business, not on the event, and it changes what you keep from every entry if it does.

Pricing choices

Once the budget gives you a price, there are five ways to shape it. None of them is required, and at a first event most are not worth the complication.

Early bird pricing

If you run an early bird, keep it to 10% off at most, and end it on the date you promised. It costs more than it looks: if the event fills on the average curve, 86 of its 120 entries arrive before the early bird ends 8 weeks out. At 10% off, that is 8.6 full entries given away, about 7% of the takings, so budget at the early bird price for those places, not the full one.

Pairs and teams

Price a pair or a team at about the same per person as an individual, or a little less. A team brings its own crowd and fills lanes faster, but it uses the same judges, kit and floor time per athlete.

Spectators

Let spectators in free. They are the atmosphere: a full stand makes the day for the athletes, and a ticket price is a reason for their friends and family to stay at home.

Deposits and instalments

Letting athletes pay in instalments only earns its place when an entry costs over about £500. At a one-day event it adds work without selling more places.

Extras

The one extra worth offering at a one-day event is the T-shirt, sold through a print-on-demand shop rather than included in the entry. Parking and camping are worth selling at bigger venues and at events over more than one day.

Sponsorship in the budget

Sponsors come in two kinds, and they pay in different ways:

- **Fitness brands** at this size mostly give product rather than cash, which is why they suit the prizes.
- **Local businesses**, such as an accountant, a physio or a plumber, are more likely to pay in cash. A few hundred pounds for a workout sponsorship is a good starting point.

Decide which costs sponsorship should cover before you price any package, then price each package against the cost it pays for. Finding sponsors for a fitness event covers who to approach, what to offer them and when.

Profit, and the year ahead

Breaking even on a first event is a good result. You have built a list of athletes, a crew who know the day, a venue that knows you, and photos to sell the next one with.

Think of the competition as a year of events rather than a one-off. The second event costs less to run, because you own more of the kit and know which costs you can cut, and it sells faster, because last year's athletes come back. The profit is made across the year.

Once entries open, check what has come in each week against the 96 places you budgeted for, so a slow fortnight is a decision you make in time rather than a surprise. On Team Aretas, the Payments page shows what has come in and when:



Common mistakes

- **Copying another event's price.** Their venue, their sponsors and their crew are not yours. Work out your own costs first.
- **Budgeting for a full event.** Priced for 120 and selling 96 leaves you a fifth short.
- **Paying for one day of a three-day hire.** A professional venue charges for set-up and pack-down too.
- **Assuming the venue includes it.** Ask for the list, and check the wifi.
- **Buying what a sponsor would give you.** Prizes, water bottles and food are the easiest things to have sponsored.
- **Paying for adverts before anyone knows the event.** Build the following first, and the adverts cost less.
- **Adding a teens category without the checks.** Everyone working with under-18s needs to be checked to work with children.

Run it on Team Aretas

Team Aretas charges a fixed price for your plan rather than a fee per athlete, and adds the card processing fee to the athlete's total at checkout, so every entry pays you its full price. You can sell individual, pair and team places side by side, run an early bird as a discount code with a limit on how many times it can be used, sell parking and camping beside the entry, and watch the takings come in on the Payments page.

- Team Aretas plans and pricing
- How Team Aretas sells entries, discount codes and extras
- Book a demo to talk through your event