

Grants & funding

Wolfson Foundation / Theatres Trust Urgent Repairs Scheme

Interim Director, *Rebecca Morland*, outlines the Trust's recently launched Urgent Repairs Scheme.

The Urgent Repairs Scheme, launched in November 2016, has been set up by the Wolfson Foundation and Theatres Trust because of the concern that both organisations share for theatres and their role in supporting and delivering live performance.



About the Wolfson Foundation

The Wolfson Foundation is one of a small number of major Trusts and Foundations which provides capital funding to the cultural sector, supporting museums and galleries, historic sites, educational institutions and performing arts organisations.

wolfson.org.uk

The background

The Wolfson Foundation's existing funding programme for the performing arts aims to support and promote excellence in the sector. Its funding is targeted at major capital projects for major theatres, with specific criteria that include being revenue funded by the Arts Council or its equivalent, and it also supports theatres that are listed Grade I or II*. Theatres Trust has, as a result, worked closely with them for some time, providing evaluations and advice on applications from theatres.

Early in 2016 we were asked to develop a proposal focusing on smaller theatres which both complemented the Foundation's existing funding programme and would also build on the knowledge and expertise that the Trust holds about theatres throughout the country. The Wolfson Foundation has a long history of working in partnership with expert bodies (for example, the Church Buildings Council) and wanted the scheme to follow similar lines, whereby the criteria were mutually agreed, the funding came from the Wolfson Foundation, but the application and evaluation process was managed by the partner organisation.

When budgets are tight, theatres often find it difficult to prioritise adequate sums for maintenance, and this leaves them vulnerable to unforeseen issues such as water ingress caused by poor weather conditions. There is also the impact of the new and more rigorous inspection regime for suspended fibrous plaster ceilings, which will almost inevitably result in many theatres needing to undertake more works to these areas. There are few funding sources which will support such works, especially if they are not part of a major capital project, and as a result both our current funding schemes have been very oversubscribed.

Our proposal was for an urgent repairs fund to support theatres with building projects that could demonstrate that without repairs the viability of the theatre and its future as a place presenting live work to audiences is at risk.

About the Urgent Repairs Scheme

The scheme will be open to all theatres that operate a year-round programme of live performance, and which do so from buildings that could be deemed significant. Theatres that are not statutory listed will need to demonstrate the architectural significance of their building. We would, of course, not fund theatre projects that are eligible to apply directly to the Wolfson Foundation.

There will be two funding rounds in 2017. Round One will close on 15 March 2017, with awards in June, and announced in July 2017, and Round Two will close on 16 September, with awards in December, and announced in January 2018. Theatres will be able to apply for grants of up to £15,000 each.

2017 will be a pilot year for the scheme, thanks to a generous donation of £100,000 from the Wolfson Foundation, but we very much hope there will be further years. Further details on eligibility, project criteria and the application form can be found at:

theatrestrust.org.uk/grants

"Through our work on the UK Theatres Small Grants Scheme and the London Theatres Small Grants Scheme, as well as the advice we provide to theatres around the country, we have become increasingly aware of the challenges facing theatres in terms of maintenance and repair."

Rebecca Morland
Interim Director

Need help applying?

Because of the nature of this scheme, we would expect to talk to most applicants in advance of their application, and would expect that many applications will come from theatres that we are already in contact with.

Potential applicants should contact our Advisers about the suitability of their projects, please email advice@theatrestrust.org.uk