Theatres Trust

Small Grants Programme supported by The Linbury Trust  
Guidance Notes for Applicants

This guidance is intended to support your application to Theatres Trust’s Small Grants Programme. The guidance notes will help you understand what we are looking for in each section or question. We are unable to answer individual enquiries about the scheme due to the number of applications we receive.

# **What we hope to fund:**

# This scheme will prioritise improvements to buildings that protect theatre use and remove barriers to participation and attendance. The fund is intended to support:

* improvements and repairs to building fabric
* purchase of key plant and machinery
* purchase of capital items that improve physical access and the audience/participant experience
* purchase of equipment to improve digital access.

Previous awards have been issued to venues to:

* Improve level access to support increased attendance from audiences with limited mobility.
* Replace or install a building management system (BMS) to improve building management efficiency, reduce energy usage and maximise staff capacity.
* Supply new heating or cooling systems to improve audience and artist experience in the auditorium.
* Improve draught-proofing of windows or doors to retain heat and save costs.
* Purchase a new hearing loop or stage text system for audiences with visual and hearing impairments.
* To replace Tungsten with LED lighting and support purchase of digital lighting operating systems.

To be eligible, venues must:

* Be a not-for-profit organisation. This can include local authorities or Town and Borough Councils that own and/or operate a venue.
* Present at least 30 performances of live public performance (theatre, dance, comedy, musicals) each year.
* Have a lease with at least five years left to run.
* Have the permission of the property owner to do the work required.

We cannot fund:

* Venues that are primarily cinemas or music venues.
* Works that have already started or are due to start before a decision about our funding is made.
* Revenue costs, including training costs.
* Loss of income related to project installation.
* The cost of building surveys or reports.

We welcome applications from theatre venues across the UK that meet these criteria, whether voluntarily or professionally run.

**Questions:**

## 2 Contact details

These questions provide us with all the contact data required about the individual and organisation applying for funding. This may differ from the details we request about your venue at question 3.1 below.

## 3 Your theatre

3.1 – 3.7 Management and governance structure

These questions will supply us with details of your venue’s governance and management structure.

We ask for two years of annual accounts to ensure you are a going concern and to give us an overview of your current financial position.

**3.8 – 3.18 Building**

These questions tell us about your theatre building, both its history and the basis on which it is owned and operated. We request this information so we understand the context in which your application is being made.

It is a requirement that all applicants are required to have a lease of five years or more. This is so that any purchase or improvement our funding supports will make a difference to your theatre’s operation for a sustained period.

We also need to know that you have permission to undertake the work required so that funding we may provide will be used the purpose intended.

* In questions 3.15 - 16 we ask if your building is listed. This is for our information only and is not an eligibility requirement.
* In question 3.17 we ask if your building is listed as a community asset or is on land registered with a community interest. In both cases this is a way of securing a building or land in community ownership or operation as an asset that furthers the social and cultural interests of the local community (or has done in the recent past). This is for our information only and is not an eligibility requirement.
* At question 3.18 we ask for photos of the works required to help us visualise the challenges or opportunities you are hoping to address through this application. If your application is successful, we may request further images for publicity purposes.

3.19 – 3.21 Programme

These questions help us understand your ambitions as a venue, the kind of programme you offer and the scale of audiences you play to. Your answers will give us a picture of your venue’s role and significance.

Word guides - We ask you to work within the word guides (where given), making the most of the opportunity to tell us your story while also keeping your information concise.

**3.19** Please tell us your ambitions and hopes for the future of your venue and how these have been shaped by the experience of Covid, the continuing cost of living crisis and current societal and environmental pressures. (150-word guide)

* We recognise that all theatres have had to navigate very challenging times over the last few years and may be working with depleted financial reserves and limited personnel to work through the current period of social, economic, political, and environmental change and uncertainty.
* We are interested to know how you are adapting to these circumstances and how this informs the ambitions and hopes you now have for your theatre.

**3.20** Please outline the programming approach taken at the theatre (100-word guide)

* Please explain briefly the different strands of programme you offer, both onstage and in the community, where appropriate. Please tell us about any priorities and policies that inform your programme.

3.21 Please complete the table below to provide us with details of:

* Current seating / standing capacities of your theatre. Please differentiate between theatre spaces (providing any names of theatre auditoria) if you have more than one auditorium).
* How many public live performances you presented in your last complete year of operation and how many people attended these performances.
* By your last complete year of operation, we mean the last financial year for which you have data. We recognise that your activity and audience levels may not be at the levels achieved prior to the Covid-19 lockdowns.
* Please note, to be eligible, your venue must present at least 30 public live performances each year.
* Please give us the total number of performances that took place in your venue during this period. Please count each time a performance takes place as one performance, for example if you have a production playing seven times over the course of five days, please include all seven performances in your list.
* We ask for this information so we know the scale of your audience and how many people will potentially benefit from the work we might fund.

* You may provide this information on a separate table if you find that easier.

## 4 Project proposal and Impact

In this section, we ask you to explain the project for which you are applying for funding. We prefer to support discrete projects or identifiable elements of a larger project rather than being part-funders of a major project.

4.1 Please tell us about the project for which you are requesting funding. (200-word guide)

* Please use this space to tell us about the work you would like to do in your building. Please give as much information as possible so we understand what is involved.
* Please include the name of any professional architects or contractors involved, where these have been identified or appointed.

4.2 Please tell us why the project is a priority for your venue and needs to be addressed at this time. (100-word guide)

* Here we are looking to learn about the current state of the building, equipment or capital function that you wish to improve and the limitations, risks or challenges this puts on your operation as a theatre.
* You will receive a response approximately three months after the application closing-date, so we are not able to fund work that requires urgent or immediate attention before this time.

**4.3** Please tell us the impact you anticipate the project having for your venue, in relation to one or more of the following Theatres Trust priorities: Resilience, Inclusivity, Environmental Sustainability and Placemaking.

We recognise that not all projects will relate directly to each of these priorities, so please only complete the section(s) that is relevant to your project.

4.3.1 Resilience:

Please tell us how this work will help your venue to adapt effectively in response to changing conditions, both internal and external. (150-word guide)

* Please use this space to tell us about the ways in which the project will enable you to continue to do what you want to be doing as a venue. For example, please tell us about any cost saving or time efficiencies that this work will achieve and explain how your organisation, and your users, will benefit from these savings.
* This can relate to any aspect of your operation including your artistic programming, financial management, audience retention and income generation.
* Examples of projects we have funded that support this priority include:
  + Purchase of digital equipment to support streaming of online theatre presentations and films to extend the offering for live audiences, with a view to increased income generation.
  + Replacing an outdated fire alarm with a more modern system to protect the fabric and ensure security of a theatre building, ensuring continued, safe operation.
  + Expanding the provision of female toilet facilities, cutting queue times, providing a better audience experience and contributing to audience retention.

4.3.2 Inclusivity:

Please tell us how this work will help your venue to provide a welcoming environment for all your users. (150-word guide)

* Please use this space to explain how this work will help to remove barriers and make your venue more accessible and appealing for users, whether artists, audiences, participants or staff.
* Please tell us about any information or research you have acquired (or feedback you have received from users) that informs the changes you wish to make.
* Please tell us about any particular groups who will benefit from the improvements you wish to make.
* Examples of projects we have funded that support this priority include:
  + The installation of automated doors to and from the stage and the orchestra pit to allow artists in wheelchairs to enter the performance areas without assistance.
  + The purchase of headsets for audiences requiring audio-description of performances
  + Installation of a new front-of-house Tanoy system to provide announcements that are audible and adjustable to suit the needs and sound requirements of different audiences, including those with additional sensory sensitivities.

4.3.3 Sustainability:

Please tell us how this work will improve the environmental sustainability of your theatre and contribute to good practice in response to the climate emergency. (150-word guide)

* Please use this space to tell us how this work will help to reduce your venue’s carbon footprint. We recommend you consider using Book 2: Sustainable Buildings of the [Theatre Green Book](https://theatregreenbook.com/) as a reference point.
* Please give details of specific energy-savings you hope to make through this work, what data these saving projections are based on, and how you plan to measure these going forward.
* Please tell us about any information or research you have acquired (or feedback you have received from users) that informs the changes you wish to make.
* Please tell us about any particular groups who will benefit from the improvements you wish to make.
* Examples of projects we have funded that support this priority include:
  + The installation of LED lighting and digital operating systems to replace Tungsten lights in theatre auditoria - to save electricity costs and reduce the time involved in manual programming and operation of lights.
  + The insulation of windows and doors to reduce draughts, retain heat and reduce fuel bills.
  + The purchase of new ventilation equipment to support a consistent temperature in the auditorium for the comfort of audiences during the hot weather.

4.3.4 Placemaking:

**Please tell us how this work will help to position or reinforce your venue as a local, national and/or international asset. (150-word guide)**

* Please use this space to tell us about the significance of your venue to your local community and how this work will strengthen your relationships with audiences, funders, artists, partners and other stakeholders.
* Please tell us why this is important to you and what difference this work will make to how your venue is valued within your community.
* Examples of projects we have funded that support this priority include:
  + Re-fit of kitchen and bar areas to provide an attractive daytime offer to communities using the venue as a social hub and for participatory activities.
  + Purchase of new lighting and AV equipment for the auditorium to improve the quality of the venue’s technical provision, to ensure it remains a key provider of performance opportunities for local and visiting artists.
  + To replace worn-out flooring to ensure participant safety and improve the offer to local dance academies and community groups making use of the venue’s facilities on a regular basis.

## 5 Project cost and budget

These questions give us financial information relating to your project.

**5.1 – 5.3**

Please tell us how much the project will cost, how much you are requesting from Theatres Trust and how much other funding you will require to be able to deliver your project as outlined above. The maximum amount of a grant from Theatres Trust is £5,000.

* We can pay up to 100% of the costs involved and there is no requirement to have other funding in place. However, if your project costs more than you are asking for from Theatres Trust, we would like to know how you plan to raise the other funds and how confident you are that this money will be received.

**5.4 – 5.5**

* Please provide quotes for delivering the project that relate to the figures in your budget, so we know what your budget is based on. We do not require you to present more than one quote as part of a tendering process.
* Please note, we cannot pay for staff time, training, loss of earnings or any revenue costs.

**5.6** Please include a budget that shows your costs and your anticipated sources of income, including the grant you are requesting from Theatres Trust.

* Please double check your budget and make sure it tells us the same information as you include in the application form. You are welcome to include a reasonable contingency in your budget (up to 10%) as we recognise that quotations may change by the time you come to do the work.
* Please explain the VAT position of the project within your budget figures and whether or not you are including the VAT component in the amount you are requesting as a small grant. We can cover the VAT element if you are not able to reclaim this yourself.
* NB. We will prioritise projects that are achievable within the value of the fund (maximum £5,000) rather than being asked to make a small contribution to a larger capital project.

## 6 Project and risk management

These questions show us how you will manage the installation of the project and the steps you will take to ensure it is delivered smoothly and in line with any building requirements.

**6.1 – 6.3**

Please tell us who will be responsible for the management of the project, what role(s) they hold and their experience of managing other projects of a similar nature.

* We want to be confident that our funds will be managed responsibly and used efficiently to deliver your project.
* Please tell us about your supplier or contractor and the person/people who will deliver the project, and those who will be responsible for managing and maintaining it once installed.

6.4 Please tell us about risks that you anticipate being involved in the project, and how you propose to plan for and manage these risks.

* We want to know that you have thought about the things that might get in the way of you being able to deliver your project as planned. This could be about costs increasing, the timeline slipping or there being a problem with the supply chain. Or there could be training or health and safety to be addressed before the work can start.
* We want to know that you have thought through different scenarios that might occur and have got a plan to work around these challenges. The more we can see you have thought about what might go wrong, the more confident we will be in your ability to make sure it all goes smoothly.

**6.5 Please tell us when you would like the work to take place**

* Please be aware that we cannot fund work that has already started or work that is due to begin before we have made decisions about your funding. Please make sure you are prepared to leave at least three months from the closing date before starting the work, should your application be successful.

**6.6** **Do you have a Safeguarding Policy?**

We want to know that you have appropriate policies in place to help you comply with the law and good practice in relation to your audiences, participants and staff. We don’t need to see a copy of your Safeguarding Policy but please tell us if this is still in development.

# **What happens next?**

We will assess the application against the following criteria:

Impact and significance:

* How effectively the applicant makes a compelling case for a capital development, refurbishment or equipment purchase to improve the fabric of the building or its operation.
* How effectively the applicant makes a case for the development being important now
* How effectively the applicant tells us the impact the project will have on at least one of our priority interest areas.
* The role and significance of venue to its communities and users

Management and risk:

* How effectively the applicant illustrates that the project is achievable within the value of the fund (up to £5,000), based on a budget and quotes that provide appropriate costings and details of any other income required.
* How effectively the applicant demonstrates that the project will be well managed financially and operationally by an experienced team.
* How effectively the applicant shows an understanding of the risks involved, has plans for potential adaptations required and has team in place to manage and offset.
* To know that the project is achievable within the timescale of the fund.

We will let you know the outcome of the application within three months of the closing date.

If successful, we will send you an offer letter, bank details form, grant agreement and terms and conditions.

Your grant will be paid to you in full once you tell us that the work is due to start. The grant must be claimed within one year of the date of the offer letter.

Once you let us know that the project is due to start, we will issue you with an evaluation report form which we will ask you to send back to us within six months of completion of the project.

If unsuccessful, we will send you an email with a brief indication of why you have not been successful and providing general feedback. Unfortunately, we are not able to provide any further detailed feedback due to the volume of applications we receive.

**Theatres Trust, September 2023**