Digital and Technological Infrastructure: Discovery Brief

Theatres Trust

About Theatres Trust

At **Theatres Trust**, we know that theatres and all the brilliant cultural activities that take place within them help to make us happier and more connected human beings.

Theatres contribute significantly to our local economies and make our towns and cities vibrant places to live and visit. We know theatres improve our mental health, create jobs for local people, and provide opportunities for young people to grow in confidence. In short, there is nothing quite as magical as a theatre.

We believe that everyone, no matter who they are or where they live, should have access to theatre and experience inspirational and transformative live performance.

But many theatres across the country struggle financially just to keep the doors open and a number are under threat of permanent closure or demolition. The challenges facing our theatres have worsened over the last few years, with huge increases in maintenance and energy costs plus cuts in vital funding sources.

This is where Theatres Trust comes in. We are the only organisation in the UK that is empowered to protect and champion the future of every theatre across the country. We are a Department of Culture, Media and Sport Arm's-Length Body that advises the government on how to support the whole of the UK's theatre sector, from small-scale community spaces through to large-scale commercial venues. We are also a statutory consultee in the planning system in England, Scotland and Wales, which means Local Planning Authorities must consult us on any planning application involving or impacting a theatre. We therefore help shape and protect the future of cultural infrastructure in every part of the country.

We also operate the **Theatres Trust Charitable Fund**, which advocates for theatres across the country, provides free and impartial expert advice, and awards grants to organisations making a difference in their community.

In **2026**, we will mark the 50th anniversary of the Theatres Trust Act being passed in parliament with a year of celebration, events, and high-profile supporter contributions. Led by Joshua McTaggart, our new CEO who joined the organisation at the end of 2024, Theatres Trust is envisioning a reinvigorated future where our organisation plays an even more impactful role in shaping and stewarding the future cultural heritage of our country.

To find out more, visit
https://www.theatrestrust.org.uk/

Transformation Programme Context

Theatres Trust is embarking on a future-proofing transformation programme running from October 2025 to March 2027.

We have employed an in-house Head of Transformation on a fixed-term basis navigating all the moving parts of this programme, and we are in the process of enlisting external support with specific areas of expertise to ensure we deliver a data-led and expert-driven transformation that places us in the strongest position for the future.

This organisation-wide programme intends to strengthen the Trust's capacity to deliver on its mission and respond to a changing cultural, political, and technological landscape.

Who are we looking for?

We are seeking an individual, a consortium, or an established firm to lead a **Discovery Phase** related to our **digital and technological infrastructure**.

It is expected that those putting forward a proposal will be experienced in:-

• Transformation projects for small and mid-scale third sector organisations

• Working with senior leaders, trustees, and delivery teams

Proposals should also demonstrate an understanding of:-

• The work of the culture sector, especially theatres

• The role Theatres Trust plays as a sector support organisation

In this document, we outline our current thinking on the scope of the Discovery Phase, including the timeframes we anticipate these requiring. However, we welcome submissions that develop or challenge this approach and encourage you to use your proposal submission to explain your approach and expected outputs.

This brief is launching concurrently with another, focused on **external services, programmes, and public perception**. We welcome proposals covering both briefs. If you are applying for both briefs, you do not need to make separate submissions, but please make it clear in your submission how you will deliver the outputs of both briefs as fully as possible.

The Brief: Digital and Technological Infrastructure

Proposed Timeline:

Starting late September 2025, with final report due on Wed 25 November 2025 to be presented at Trustee Meeting on Tue 2 December 2025.

Purpose

To define the digital capabilities, systems, and strategic direction required to support Theatres Trust's future delivery, resilience, and sector impact.

This phase will assess the organisation's current digital environment and identify the foundational improvements needed to enable transformation, with a focus on integration, usability, and long-term value.

The final report will provide the groundwork for a Development Stage that will propose digital/technological solutions and a Delivery Phase that will procure and implement the solutions from the Development Stage.

Key Outputs:

Audit and Mapping of existing digital infrastructure and tools

- Review of current platforms, including:
  - Website
  - CRM (Salesforce)
  - Mailing Lists
  - Microsoft 365 including Outlook, Teams and SharePoint
 - Online database of theatres

- Identify strengths, weaknesses, overlaps, and gaps

- Map internal data flows and systems integrations

- Clarify ownership and accountability for digital and data systems

- Review governance structures and decision-making processes relating to digital infrastructure

- Identify current and potential risks associated with digital systems, including cyber security, data protection, business continuity, and system dependencies

Assess User Needs and Experience

- Gather insights from staff, sector stakeholders, and public users to understand key needs, behaviours, and expectations across all digital platforms

- Assess user journeys and access barriers, particularly for the website, theatre database, and engagement tools

- Identify opportunities to improve accessibility, usability, and audience engagement

Benchmarking against Sector Landscape and Digital Maturity Assessment

- Review digital and technological infrastructure used by comparable organisations

- Evaluate current digital capabilities, system usage, and staff confidence

- Situate Theatres Trust's digital maturity and aspirations within current sector standards

- Identify barriers to effective digital working

- Assess internal training and resourcing needs
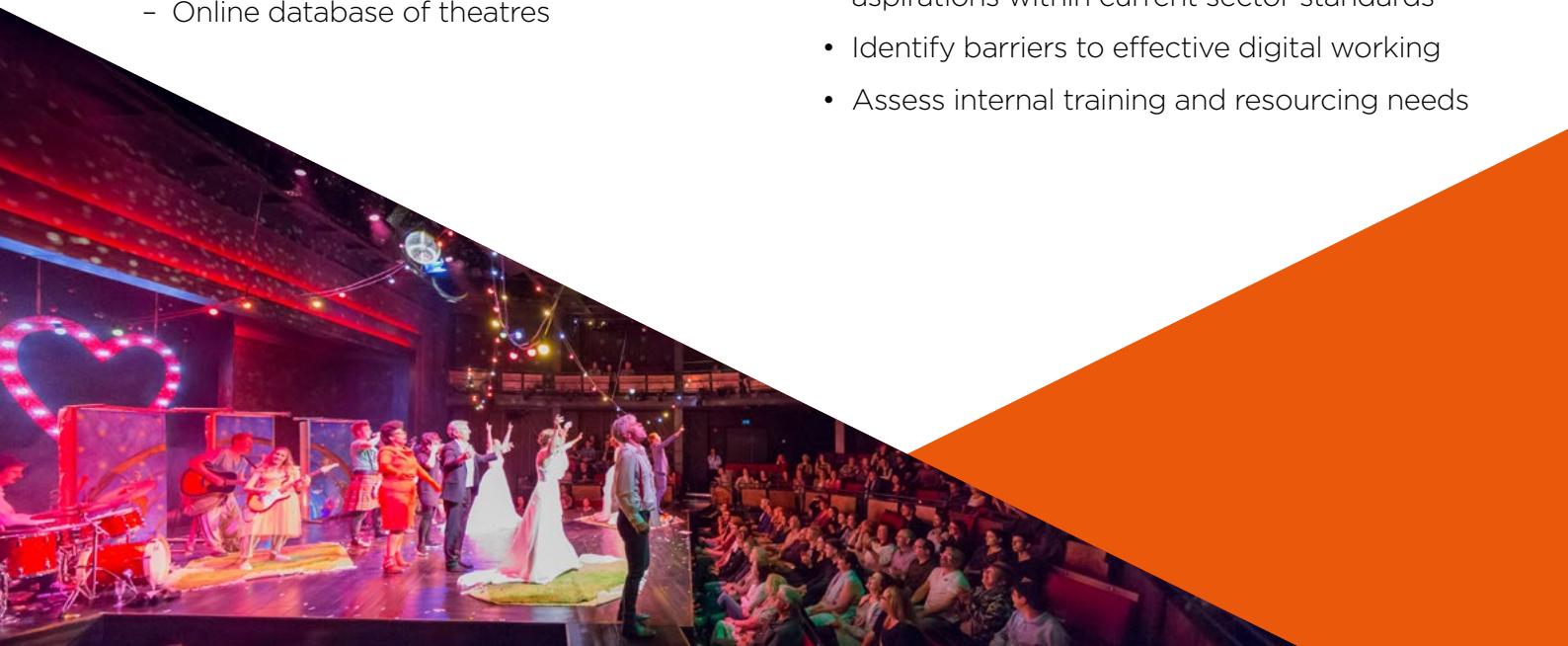
Presentation of Preliminary Recommendations

Using the outputs listed above, the final deliverable should include a structured set of preliminary recommendations to shape Theatres Trust's 'Development Phase' in early 2026.

These should provide a clear bridge between diagnostic insights and future action planning. The recommendations are expected to be presented in the form of a report with the above outputs used as appendices or embedded into the report, though we are open to proposals that present their preliminary recommendations in a different format.

The recommendations should address the following:

Defined Digital Requirements

Articulate Theatres Trust's short-, medium-, and long-term digital needs, based on organisational priorities, staff and user input, and sector context. These should reflect the organisation's evolving size, complexity, and ambitions and be structured in relation to achievable timeframes and delivery stages.

High-Level Strategic Options

Present and compare high-level strategic pathways for Theatres Trust's digital future. These should include different models of digital maturity, infrastructure investment, and integration—evaluated against criteria such as cost-effectiveness, scalability, operational fit, and resilience. Options should be clearly aligned to Theatres Trust's long-term organisational goals and mission delivery.

Targeted Strategic Recommendations

Provide concrete, prioritised recommendations across the following key areas:

- **CRM and Data Architecture**
  Recommendations on the future structure, capability, and integration of CRM systems, including data quality, segmentation, workflows, reporting, and automation.

- **Website and Content Delivery**
  Strategic direction for the website as a public-facing tool for communication, resource sharing, and advocacy.

- **Online Database of Theatres**
  Recommendations for improving the database's usability, functionality, and accuracy, as well as its potential role in sector intelligence and public engagement.

- **Sector Engagement Tools**
  Assessment of current engagement channels and recommendations for strengthening digital tools to support consultation, collaboration, knowledge sharing, and sector advocacy.

- **Internal Platforms and Integrations**
  Proposals to improve internal systems for productivity, collaboration, and knowledge management—ensuring platforms are aligned, user-friendly, and effectively integrated to support cross-team working and organisational learning.

Recommendations should be clearly connected to audit findings, risk assessments, and identified user and staff needs. Where relevant, they should include indicative sequencing, resourcing requirements, and potential delivery partners or frameworks.
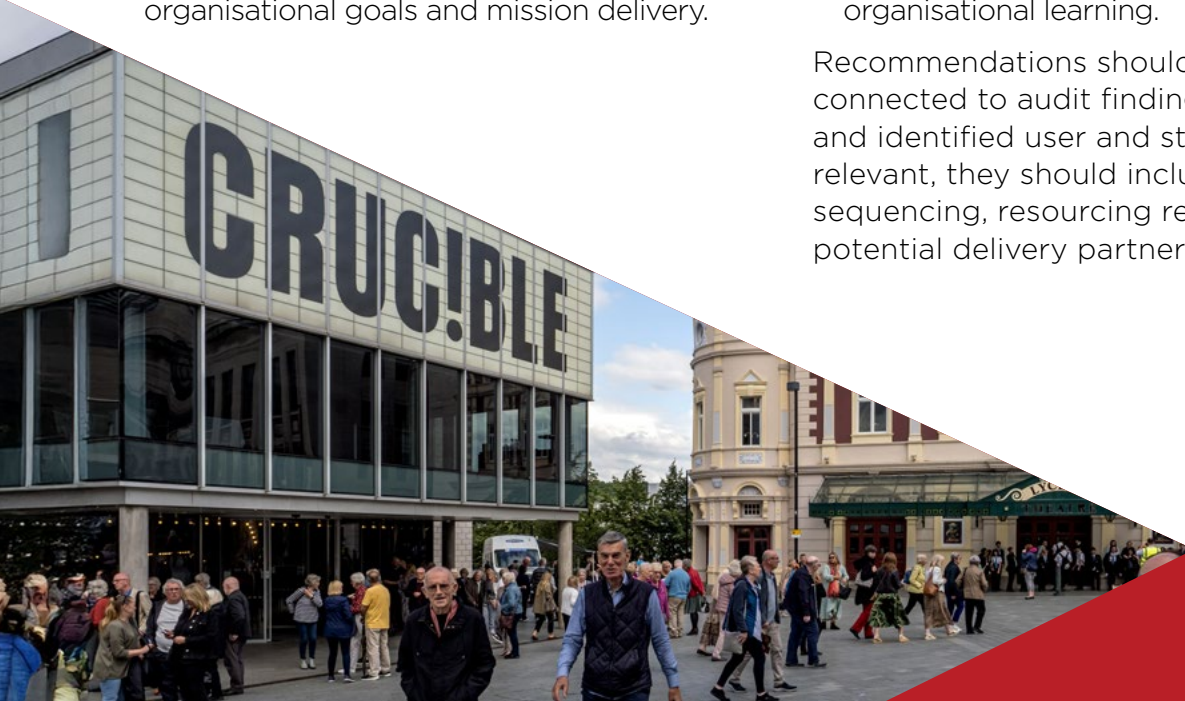
How to Apply

In line with our procurement policy, we invite written proposals in response to this brief. Proposals should demonstrate a clear understanding of the scope and objectives of the Discovery Phase, outline the proposed methodology, and include a fee proposal.

You may respond to either the Digital and Technological Infrastructure Brief or the External-Facing Services and Stakeholder Perception brief or submit a combined proposal covering both. If responding to both Briefs, please ensure your submission clearly distinguishes your approach, timeline, and budget for each area, and any proposed efficiencies in delivering them together.

Budget and Fee Proposal

A budget of £10,000 (ex. VAT) is currently allocated for each Discovery Phase brief (£20,000+VAT total if applying for both briefs simultaneously). This includes all delivery fees and associated on-costs for research, analysis, and production of the final report.

You may propose a fee that is lower or higher than the allocated budget. However, value for money will be a key consideration in our assessment.

If your proposal exceeds the budget, please include a clear rationale outlining the added value or additional scope your approach provides.

What to Include in Your Proposal

Proposals should be no more than **6 pages**, and should include:

- An overview of your proposed approach, including methodology and anticipated stages of work.

- A summary of your relevant experience, including team members and comparable projects.

- Your proposed timeline for delivery, including key milestones.

- Your fee proposal, including day rates, estimated time allocation, and any anticipated expenses.

- For joint proposals covering both briefs, please indicate any cost savings, delivery efficiencies, or shared insight approaches.

Please submit your proposal as a PDF file sent to **rachael.smith@theatrestrust.org.uk**, with the subject line "Transformation Proposal"

The deadline for submission is **5pm on Tuesday 9 September**.

Assessment Criteria

Criteria	What We're Looking For	Weighting
Understanding of the Brief	Clear grasp of the brief's scope, objectives, and intended outcomes	25%
Approach and Methodology	A practical, thoughtful, and structured plan for delivery, including stakeholder engagement	25%
Relevant Experience	Evidence of similar or relevant work, with appropriate skills and insight	20%
Value for Money	A justified fee proposal, with transparent costing and proportionality to scope	20%
Delivery Capacity and Timeline	Realistic and achievable plan within the timeframe, including team availability	10%

Each criterion will be scored using the following scale:-

Score	Rating	Explanation
0	**Unacceptable**	Does not meet the requirements or provides no relevant evidence
1	**Adequate**	Meets some requirements but lacks clarity, detail, or sufficient justification
2	**Good**	Fully meets requirements with clear, relevant, and convincing evidence
3	**Exceeds**	Strongly exceeds requirements and provides added value or innovation

Future Phases

For avoidance of doubt, the successful applicant(s) will be granted right of first refusal to bid for the subsequent Development Phase, which is expected to begin in January 2026 and lead to a full procurement and implementation process in spring 2026. However, there will be no expectation for Theatres Trust to appoint the successful applicant(s) to deliver the Development Phase or future project phases.