

Grants for the Arts Application Guidelines

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GRANTS FOR THE ARTS APPLICATION GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines have been prepared by the WGGB Theatre Committee and are offered to help theatre writers in preparing the application form for Grants for the Arts, but are by no means definitive.

We hope that these guidelines will also help ACE personnel involved in the Grants for the Arts process in the regional offices better understand theatre writers. It is absolutely their remit to respond to writers' needs as individual artists. We know there is concern from artists that those involved in the final decision-making process are often not theatre specialists, and we hope to raise the general level of understanding of those who are involved, no matter what their specific capacity.

These guidelines are also an experiment for us, and we wish to follow the process. If and when you, as an individual theatre writer, make an application, please tell us (including which office you have applied to) so that we may track and monitor applications to see how writers are doing.

GETTING ADVICE

We have been strongly advised by the Theatre / Drama Officers in ALL of the regional offices that you should consult with someone within the theatre department (NOT a clerical officer). Discuss what you want to do and ask questions while you are preparing your application rather than after you have finished. It is up to that individual person how deeply he or she is prepared to be involved in your application, but feel free to ask all the questions you deem necessary: if you are unsatisfied, ask to speak to an officer. It is not official policy for officers to look at first-drafts, but that may possibly be negotiated between you and the particular person you're dealing with.

Be sure and note the names of ALL people you speak to. Remember that it is useful to list the person who has been your advisor under Section E, question 26 of the application: this can serve as a prompt internally for that person, who knows you and what you need, to be given your application to assess.

THE APPLICATION IN GENERAL

Remember that exactly the same application form is used by you as an individual and by organisations such as the National Theatre or the British Museum. Therefore, don't be shocked or put off that much of the language seems aimed at large organisations. Ignore this, and go about your business of saying what you need to as compellingly as possible.

Remember that while your work is very personal to you, it isn't helpful for your own self-worth to take the application personally. This is part of a process, like filling out

your tax form or passing your driving test. The point, for you as an individual artist, is to achieve your goal of attaining funding, so that you can THEN go about fulfilling your creative aspirations.

Still, try to be fresh and individual and complete. You're trying to catch someone's eye. Explain yourself fully: this isn't like 'pitching'. One easy criticism of an application is if it feels 'thin' or 'under worked'.

Many of the sections of 'Writing the Proposal' contain suggested bullet points to respond to. Don't attempt to 'play the game' and feel compelled to reply to points that aren't appropriate or have no bearing on what you want to do.

If you want funding to do exploratory work and are unsure of where you wish to go from there, don't be afraid to consider making a 'staged' application, i.e. either one application in parts or two or three applications for small grants, but be sure to be clear in stating your intent. For example: Step one: bursary/ research and development; Step two: first draft,; Step three: work-shopping.

WRITING YOUR PROPOSAL:

Read pages 19-22 of the Guidance notes carefully. Again, many of the specific bullet points listed within the six headings do not apply to individual artists making applications (i.e. 'How your activity represents good value for money') and so they needn't be addressed. Use your common sense. But do try to respond in some way to each of the six headings listed within your essay.

1) You and your work

This is the most important part of the application, the heart of your application and it should be your description of what you want to do. This is your opportunity to convince the ACE officer / panel of the value and substance of your proposal; first to you as an artist and then, if appropriate, to the public.

2) Making it happen

Don't forget that your primary, creative activity is probably simply writing and the reader of the application should understand this.

Remember that you may wish to make a staged application, if this feels appropriate. Don't be afraid to ask your officer what he or she thinks: this may give you a better chance of success.

Are you proposing to work alone or are you wishing to involve a theatre company as a partner in some sense (i.e. a 'self-commission')?

If you are a newer writer, Involving a theatre may give you added credence and increase your chances of success, but only do it if it feels comfortable to you. If you do wish to do so, you and the theatre should consider which of you should make the

application. This decision should be made objectively by considering who is likely to be more successful, in the light of:

- whether the company is already being supported by ACE funds for other projects or activities and is, therefore, running low on 'credit'.
- the track record of the writer as against the profile or 'reputation' of the company.
- whether the commission money for writing, as a discrete amount, would appear less financially onerous for ACE; in which case you could describe the company's involvement (dramaturgy, workshops) as a further stage, to be applied for separately.

If you have a proven track record and have been produced in the past, you may feel more confident to apply as an individual artist, with no implied partner (although you can always 'background' any company who may be interested), requesting a sum purely as 'development money', equivalent to the old-fashioned bursary.

Evidence of support can be the inclusion of a letter from the theatre.

The 'long term effect' can simply be that that the project represents a new direction for you as a writer, that you feel that it will make you a better writer, or that the piece will benefit the culture as a whole; but, again, do not feel compelled to address every bullet point.

3) The Budget

Remember that if you are applying for a self-commission, the WGGB/ ITC rate is above £5,000, and this section must be considered.

4) Benefit to the public

This phrase is somewhat off-putting for us as writers, but it is an important heading to answer. (Again, a thin response can be a simple reason for failing an application.)

Don't forget that the support of artists is central to the *raison d'être* of Arts Council England, and your ultimate objective as a creative practitioner is to communicate with the public. Therefore, providing a brief 'mission statement' as an artist -- the theme of the work -- is a good starting place. You can then refer to your previous accomplishments/ track record -- or any clear objectives with a theatre company - to indicate that there would be a *demand for the activity*.

5) Supporting the Arts

As with 4), you can begin by addressing this issue in terms of your personal development as an artist. And then (but only if this is relevant) you can plug some of the proposal's potential in terms of young people or cultural diversity or priority areas etc.

6) Evaluation

Perhaps all you need to make clear under this heading is that as a practicing, professional playwright, self-evaluation is integral to your activity through the stages of drafting and re-drafting. Then, if there are partners involved, outline the constructive critical process you intend thereafter.

If it is a staged application, address how you will know if you are ready to move on to the next stage. Would you have done what you said you would do? Would you have followed relevant time schedules you set out?

THE APPLICATION FORM

This is the form first read as part of your overall application. It determines to whom your entire application is passed on for assessment. If the simple rules are not adhered to your application may be held up or may not be sent for assessment. The simple rules include answering every question arrowed, and marking others N/A if that's appropriate. Remember applications are not normally accepted by email.

Where questions are obviously self explanatory there are no comments.

Question 5

Individual writers, applying for what is essentially a bursary grant, to support the process of writing a play, will tick Individual. Even if you have talked to a company which has expressed interest in seeing a draft, you are still applying as an individual.

Question 7

This is the most important question in the application form itself. It gives you opportunity to locate and contextualise yourself in the new theatre writing landscape. Here you might note down your past experience, but not in simple CV format (remember you are also obliged to include your CV as an attachment). Instead speak in terms perhaps of the themes or issues which drive your practice (your writing); the forms in which you have worked or are seeking to work; the nature of relationships established with theatres and producers in the past; the nature of working practices with which you have engaged (straight commissions, or work developed in different collaborative contexts).

What you say here should give a snapshot of you and your work; if you reference work which has taken place in regions other than that in which you are applying, the officer may contact the officer of that region for further information.

Question 16

In all probability, this would be Theatre & Drama – and the application then would be passed to a Theatre officer (most probably the officer to whom you've already spoken). Consider what department you think would give you the most receptive response, but also feel free to ask if you have any confusion: for examples, musicals now fall under Theatre and live art theatre production falls under Visual Arts. ACE can also involve other departments internally while assessing if it seems appropriate.

Question 17

This is also very important and is a précis of your project proposal. Focus your answer on *the activity* for which you are seeking support. You are asking them to support the process, so detail the most important elements.

This may merely be for the writing process itself, i.e. you are asking for support to sit down and write for six months. Or, for example, you are interested in investigating 'form' or an issue or an idea. Include the imperative of your idea for the play, perhaps the starting point, but you are not writing the play here: again, this is not a pitch.

You might also elaborate your working process, i.e, a three-month desk or field research period; it may include travel (research); or you might simply state you intend a six-week stint toward a sketch draft a further six weeks toward a rough draft, etc; then perhaps a reading of some sort; then a further writing period. It may be helpful if you can indicate any first intended steps you have in mind for the piece of work once finished. If you have a dramaturg arranged, you may state at what point he or she might engage with the process.

A focussed answer to the question actually helps you with your procedure, and so helps convince officers you know what you are doing.

Question 18

If you are applying effectively for a bursary to write, you should not be applying for less than the Union minimum – around £6.5K. This means you are not going to hear about your application for three months after submission . . . so you can't plan a start date sooner than three months after you submit. The end date can be calculated from whatever time scale is implicit in the procedure set out in Question 17.

Question 19

Writers applying for bursary funding can tick No., and state something like: 'The application is for grant support on a development process'. If regionalism is part of the theme, however, you may choose to tick Yes.

Question 21

N/A.

Question 22

Since this is a must answer question, you should tick the boxes to which you intend your work to be applicable – adding perhaps an NB: 'The play is intended for age ranges ticked above'.

Question 23

Tick those boxes to which the play is intended to be particularly applicable. Or mark the question N/A.

Question 24

While this is a question which you can mark N/A, it can help if you can identify a particular focus (if there is one). Remember, ACE has its priorities, its aims and criteria . . . if your work reflects these, let ACE know about it.

Also remember that Questions 23 and 24 may relate to your response to 'Public benefit' in your Proposal.

Question 25

Writers may mark this N/A.

Question 26

Again set down here the name of the officer you've been in contact with in your regional office. Then when your application is received, it will probably be sent to this person.

Question 27

This can also include TIE or a local education system.

Section F - Budget

We have often been told that experienced writers may, of course, request above the minimum but remember that ACE's funds are finite!

Income for your activity

Bursary applications will usually only have 'income' from other sources in the areas of 'Private funding', or 'Support in Kind'.

For example, under Private income, you might put, 'Contribution from own funds', tick 'Confirmed', and enter, say £650.00 – if you know overall expenditure will be this much more than that for which you are applying – but remember you will have to account for the expenditure under 'Expenditure for your activity'.

Under Support in kind, you might enter, 'Office, equipment hire, library and administration costs – self-donation', tick 'Confirmed' and enter say '£300.00'.

Expenditure for your activity

The principle amount here will be for artistic activity. You should enter, 'Writing process' and set down the fee, which will not be lower than the Union minimum. If you have travel and research, separate these costs out, enter Travel and Research to XX (name the location), then enter subcategories, stating fares, overnights, etc, and enter the relevant amounts for each. You should be quite specific and quite detailed about your expenditure.

You can also include dramaturg fees, as you can workshop fees so long as these are arranged

If there are Overheads, state what these are, and enter relevant amounts.

If you have offered self-donations in kind, enter under Value of support in kind, exactly what these are, and the appropriate amounts.

Finally check your total income equals your total expenditure.

END