
APPLYING TO GRANTS FOR THE ARTS

A handy guide for first timers applying for up to £15,000



Written by Abby Butcher for Camden People's Theatre, Sprint 2015
To accompany the session at CPT on Tues 31st March 2015

INTRODUCTION

Grants for the arts is a Lottery-funded grant programme for individuals, arts organisations and other people who use the arts in their work. Grants are available for activities carried out over a set period and which engage people in England in arts activities and help artists and arts organisations in England carry out their work.

When you need money to make or tour your work, Grants for the Arts will be your first port of call. This guide will lead you through the questions step-by-step. It is designed to complement the Arts Council England (ACE) resources (listed at the end of the document.) It should be noted that this is all my opinion; these are tips that I've learnt along the way as a producer, there is not a right way to do it, this is just how I do it!

Some things to consider before you start:

- You should apply for a self-contained project with a start middle and end.
- Your application will probably be focused on one of two things – Research and Development or Touring. I'm generalizing here but it's often useful to think in these terms, especially for your first application. Are you making a show or touring it? These two things are not necessarily exclusive of one another, but you will most likely find your project is one or the other.
- Think about what will be valuable for the project, not what the Arts Council what to hear. Don't do post show discussions or workshops for the hell of it, do what is important to your work.
- I would suggest writing your application in third person, this can feel a little weird if you are a solo artist writing about yourself but I think it gives a distance and professionalism. First person is totally acceptable, this is just a personal preference that I find helps me.
- Remember that the person reading your application doesn't know your practice or anything about your work. Back everything up with quotes, names of shows you were in, artists you've worked with etc. Also be clear about why you need to do the things you've proposed. Spell everything out.

Your project idea should be leading the direction of the application, not the other way round. Try and think about what you want to do in detail before you start filling in the form. You may find you are including add ons for the sake of ticking a box. This is not useful for anyone. A great suggestion from [Simon Day's recent wonderful G4A guide](#) is to think about your project aims; and then check if all of your plans relate back to one of your aims. If they don't scrap them.

LET'S BEGIN...

Basic Details

What is the name or working title of the activity you are applying to do? (50 characters)

A concise description of your activity,

E.g. Research and development of new theatre show XYZ

National tour of theatre show XYZ

Please give us a concise description of the activity you are asking us to support (100 words)

Be concise and clear. This should be a summary of the whole application.

- Mention your partner venues, collaborators (directors, lighting designers etc.)
- Is this activity happening nationally? E.g. a national tour? Say so.
- Do you have a specific focus on an audience that don't usually engage in the arts? What's going to make this application stand out from the others? Highlight it here.
- Include the word 'theatre' in here, it will ensure it gets read by the right person.

ARTISTIC QUALITY

Please provide a brief summary of your recent relevant artistic work, experience and achievements. (250 words)

- Start with a short bio on your practice to give them a taste (you can elaborate on this later)
- Then big yourself up, but do it with facts, not superlatives. What shows have you made? What venues have you performed at? Have you won any awards? Do you have a degree in something relevant to your practice? Have you been offered residency space at a venue? Have you run a series of workshops? Have you been mentored by an established artist you can namedrop?

What is your proposed artistic activity, and what do you want to achieve by doing it? (250 words)

- Again, start with a concise sentence. *E.g. This application is to support the research and development of XYZ's new show ZYX to include 3 weeks residency at Camden People's Theatre, collaborating with a Lighting Designer and dedicated time for the producer to book a UK time. ZYX is a show about XXXXXXXXXXXX.*
- Don't forget the second half of the question, what will this activity enable you to achieve? Think about this period of activity and beyond it. In the short term it may allow you to develop a show into a tourable piece, engage with a wide and diverse audience, expand your networks and grow relationships etc.
- It can sometimes be useful to bullet point your answers, here you could literally put

Proposed activity:

- Blah

- Blah
- Blah

To achieve:

- Blah
- Blah
- Blah

Remember what I said about spelling it out.

Why is the activity important for your artistic development? (250 words)

- Where do you see yourself in 3 years? Think about your dream career trajectory and where this moment in time factors into that. A 'classic' artist narrative is to make show 1, tour show 1, and whilst touring show 1 you have a couple of residencies at some tour venues and start making show 2. This strengthens your relationship with these venues (they may even want to commission you!) and, if you can get funding for this, is one possible model of sustainability. There's a ton more options though, this is just one suggestion. Talk about where this period of activity fits into your bigger picture. Also remember that this is an investment from ACE, they want to see that there will be benefits from this beyond the immediacy of the project period.
- Are you working with a lighting designer or choreographer for the first time? Say so and say why that's important to your development as an artist. What will they bring to the work and your practice? Think beyond just the skill they are supporting you/your work on, peer-to-peer learning is a vital part of the performance eco-system, it allows us to expand our skill sets and grow collaborative networks. *E.g. perhaps you will continue to work with that Lighting Designer for your next show. This time and money will allow you to develop that relationship as well as having them work on this show.*
- Think about other elements of this activity. Are you running workshops? What will this teach you and how will this feed into your artistic development?

Please outline how each artist will contribute to the activity, and give a brief description of their work (250 words)

- 'Artists' constitutes you, designers, collaborators, directors, lighting and sound designers, costume makers, choreographer etc. Producers/ administrators come up later.
- Include their name, website (if they have one) and a shot bio. Then discuss what they are doing specifically on this project. How many days will you work with your dramaturge? Specificity shows you have a good grip on your activity and have planned your relationships you're your collaborations.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Who will engage in this activity? Tell us about the target audiences or people taking part, and how they will engage with the activity. If an activity will not engage people immediately, e.g. some research and development activities, please tell us about who you anticipate will engage with your work in the longer term (250 words)

- This can be a sticking point on some applications, and it is also one of the most crucial parts. The arts council's tagline is Great Art for Everyone. You could make the best show ever but if you just do it in your bedroom they will not fund it. As it says above they don't expect your R&D to engage with thousands of people, but it's crucial that you prove that it will have some public engagement further down the line.
- Don't spend hours working out how to fill in the numbers section of the form, I have it on relatively good authority that they only glance over it so don't bust your balls on it. The answers to these questions are the real important thing here.
- It might be worth getting the bullet points out again here. For clarity some people like to break down their audiences into sections and elaborate on how they will engage with each of them eg. Student audiences, dance audiences, LGBT audiences etc. Does your work have a niche that would attract a certain group of people?
- There's a great publication by ACE called [Arts Audiences: Insight](#) that is absolutely worth having a look through, work out what you think you are (Urban Arts Eclectic anyone?!) and look at what audiences you are interested in engaging with your work. Reference the document and your target demographic by all means.

Ways an R&D can engage with the public

- ♥ Scratch/preview performances
- ♥ Workshops
- ♥ Online, your website, a blog documenting your process
- ♥ Ultimately, when the show tours

Ways a tour can engage with the public

- ♥ This is easier: audiences!
- ♥ But also don't dismiss the idea of workshops - they are great for bringing in more income (more on this later) and for audience development and building relationships with venues
- ♥ Post show discussions

Please describe how you will reach your target audience or participants, in the short or long term, and give details of your proposed marketing activities where appropriate. (250 words)

- Marketing. A lot of this will come from any venue partners you have. Talk to them about what they will do for you. If you are touring this will most likely include websites, printed programmes, social media outlets, flyers, posters around the venue. Use numbers when talking about your social media sites – Facebook page (540 likes) twitter (700 followers) etc.
- You should absolutely create a trailer for your work, this would be a good place to mention it.
- If you are running workshops, think about how you will reach your workshop participants, perhaps you could use online callouts like the Arts Admin e-digest or work with universities to attract their students.
- You might want to reference your target groups from the aforementioned publication here.
- It's hard to get audiences for contemporary/experimental work. That's basically a given. Recognise this, ACE know it too, use it as an excuse to get creative with the way you engage with your audiences/participants and really focus on groups that don't usually engage with this type of work.

FINANCE

Your budget

If you don't like budgets, you're going to need to work out how to get on. Your budget is a crucial element of your application and it's vital that you can manage one if your grant is successful. Once you get your head around it you will honestly feel empowered.

[Here's my budget template](#), you're very welcome to use it! It's filled with the sums to work out:

- ♥ Contingency at 3% (if you'd like to increase this just change the number 3 in the sum.) Usually contingency should be between 3-10% but it really depends on the project and how much risk is involved. It's basically a safety blanket incase anything goes wrong.
 - ♥ Your total expenditure and total income, which will work out what your request to ACE is.
 - ♥ What percentage of the CASH budget you are asking ACE for
 - ♥ What percentage of the FULL (including in kind support) budget you are asking ACE for
- You need to assign one line for every item of expenditure and income. Breakdown your sums e.g. 15 producing days at £150 per day.
 - Don't restrict yourself or be frugal here, think of things around your project that will benefit you for this period or in the long term. Do you need a website? Do you have an artist who you would love to work with on your piece for a day or two? Build this in.

Income for your activity

Please describe your approach to raising as much money as you can from other sources. Identify which other sources of funding you have applied to, and the progress of any other applications you have made (including the date you will know the outcome). (250 words)

- ACE will fund max up to 90% of your project cost, although really you want to aim for them to be contributing less than this. The more hard cash investment you have from other places, the bigger the approval stamp from your collaborators and the stronger your case.
- This money is increasingly harder to get, you need to be creative.
- The average % match including in kind for successful applications is 65%. You can work out what your % ask is in the budget template.
- If your ask to ACE is relatively low, highlight this. If it's kind of high but when you factor in your in kind support it's only 60% SAY THIS. Effectively, if it wasn't for all your generous partners giving you free rehearsal space etc. then ACE would be forking out a lot more to cover this.

Places where match can come from: (think of this as leverage money)

- ♥ Commissions from venues. Perhaps you've been lucky enough to get a £3K commission to make your show, or maybe a venue can give you £300 towards some of your costs. Everything counts.
- ♥ Fees from venues. If a venue is paying you a fee to present your work this counts towards your budget, you can also include box office splits. Of course this will have to be an estimate. Make sure you do a breakdown in your income line, *E.g. 70% of 100 capacity venue @ £5 ticket 60/40 split in company's favour = £210*
- ♥ Workshops held at venues you tour to. Often venues will have separate departments for learning and participation, they may be interested in you running a workshop whilst you're in town with the show.

This is a great way of getting your feet under the table with the venue and local audiences and will also bring in additional income to your budget.

- ♥ Trusts and Foundations. These are private pots of money and are hard to get your hands on, but are worth pursuing. Examples of big foundations that regularly support theatre are [Jerwood Foundation](#), [Foyle Foundation](#) and [Wellcome Trust](#). There are also numerous other trusts but they tend not to have websites and are hard to research. Many of them often only accept applications from charities.
- ♥ Private investment. You don't need to say that your mum is giving you £500 towards your project, in fact, don't. Be professional, and call it private investment. There's nothing to stop you investing your own money if you can, this will increase your income coming from other avenues but obviously doesn't come with the clout of £500 from a venue, as that relationship is not just about the \$\$\$.
- ♥ Local authority funding, your local council may have funds you can access to support you. My council (Brighton and Hove) just ended their scheme, and I don't think this is a one off. I know for us at least that they are changing how they run their schemes, and there are still arts commissions of £5k available that tie into other priorities so keep an eye out for these in your local area.
- ♥ Crowd-funding. If you are ok with doing this then be strategic, remember that you can't then ask people for money again in six months. And try to avoid doing it in summer when people are trying to get money for the Fringe.

Spending (expenditure) for your activity

Briefly tell us your experience in managing budgets, and describe how you will manage the budget (250 words)

- Have you managed budgets before? How big were they? Think about the infrastructure of your project and outline how you will manage it.
- Mention the things that will enable you to manage your budget well, such as contracts, invoices and contingency.
- Do you have a separate bank account for managing this grant? It's worth doing this and saying that you have opened one and why.

Please describe how any fess, rates and purchases have been calculated. (250 words)

- Go through your budget and explain how you arrived at each figure.
- You should use industry standard rates for paying performers; ITC is a good reference for this (link below).
- Ensure you are looking for the cheapest prices for your travel, props etc. and state this.

Support in Kind

Please use this box to explain your support in kind in more detail, if necessary. (250 words)

This can include a number of things. Think about what you do not have to pay for but usually would. Rehearsal space, accommodation, dramaturgy support, producing support from venues, tech support, marketing support, meetings with Artistic Directors count as their time and valuable support but they don't make you pay for it, include it. Is a friend taking photos during your rehearsals for free? Put it in. Think about the

generosity of people around you, put a value on it and add it in. Your in kind can end up being £1000s of pounds which is valuable as it proves venues and people want to support you and believe in your work, and it counts towards your final match %. ACE are also aware that it's becoming increasingly hard to attract match funding, so in kind support is increasingly more recognized and valued.

MANAGEMENT

Partners

Please provide a brief summary of your and your partner's recent experience in managing similar types of activity. (250 words)

If you have someone involved in your project as a producer this is the chance to talk about their experience. Say what budgets you have managed and what projects you have run. If this is your first bit of funding then think about other activity you've led on. Starting Blocks/Sprint would be a good example of one as you can talk about managing a budget, planning activity with the help of the partner venue etc.

Preliminary tour schedule

When you input your tour schedule you can chose confirmed, penciled or not yet spoken to. Avoid the latter. You should submit with as many confirmed dates as possible, if you think you can get a venue to the point of confirmation before you submit, try to. It really strengthens the application the more concrete the tour is.

Activity Plan

Planning to date

Please briefly identify the main stages of any planning and preparation activity completed to date. Please note this work should not be included in your budget, as we cannot fund any part of an activity that has already taken place. (100 words)

Just outline here what's happened. E.g. all artists are confirmed, all venues confirmed etc. Note that they won't fund what's already happened.

Activity Plan

You just need to fill out your step by step plan here. Write this up in excel and then transfer it over, once you add a line you can't add anything above it, it's really annoying, so just plan it all and then input it rather than creating it in the form.

Evaluation

Please briefly describe your plans to evaluate this activity. (100 words)


- Think about what will be useful for you. You will need to submit an activity report at the end of the grant to receive the final installment, so you could acknowledge that here.
- Will you film or photograph the process/show?
- Will you gather audience/participants feedback?
- You could use the [SWOT](#) method for evaluation.

Attachment

You can include 1 link or document up to 5 pages long. This is there to illustrate the quality of your work. You could include:

- ♥ Production images
- ♥ Promo images
- ♥ Letters of support
- ♥ Examples of collaborators work e.g. lighting and set designers

TIPS!

- Check your spelling! Come on, this is easy. Don't make yourself seem sloppy and unprofessional by making simple mistakes.
- Check your grammar! Ditto.
- You're going to love me for this one...  If you are having a battle with the word count and cannot bare to cut out anymore words, substitute some of your 'ands' for ampersands &&& they don't get included in the word count! The day I discovered that was a really great day.
- Don't start writing straight into the form, write it in a word doc (or google drive doc if you are writing it collectively with your producer/company) and then input it when you are totally ready to do so. The form is kind of technologically frumpy and plays up sometimes. You also can't have 2 people logged in and working on it at the same time. Same goes for your budget, as mentioned above. Use the template provided.
- Set yourself a deadline for submitting your application. Put it in your diary, tell some people who you know will hold you to it. Factor in time for someone to check over your application and send you back comments too.

OTHER FABULOUS RESOURCES

[Arts Council How to Apply Guidance sheets](#) – your first port of call

[Arts Council Information sheets](#) – also some great stuff in here, use it!

[Applying for Grants for the Arts by Richard Kingdom \(House resource\)](#) – top tips from ex-ACE officer Mr. Kingdom

[In fact, House have a ton of incredible resources](#) – bookmark this page.

[Arts Admin Advisory Service](#) – Arts admin offers free one-to-one advice sessions to all UK-based artists at any stage of their career who work in contemporary performance practice. They all are so lovely, this is so worth doing just to get to know them and for them to get to know you.

[ITC resources](#) – loads of useful stuff here, take a look at the Rates of Pay to reference in your income section.

[Theatre Bristol's ACE guide](#) is a brilliant resource.

[E-digest](#)- Your go to point for all upcoming opportunities, call outs and commissions.

[Twitter](#) is really great for keeping on top of opportunities. It's also a brilliant social platform for you as an artist if you don't have a website yet. If you're into country music and/or contemporary theatre follow me [HERE!](#)

Abby Butcher is a Brighton-based theatre producer, specialising in contemporary practices and Queer performance. She worked as Programme Manager at [The Basement](#) until 2013 and now co-runs [The Marlborough Theatre's](#) programme alongside her work as a producer for Queer/LGBT organisation [Pink Fringe](#). She produces independent artists [Rachel Mars](#), [None of Us is Yet a Robot](#) and [Mars.tarrab](#) and is working as Artist Development Producer for Sprint Festival 2015.