

GENERAL ADVICE

The new Project Grants (PG) form can feel confusing and frustrating. This guide is written to support you in a very practical way to put your ideas and notes together before you tackle Grantium.

Here are some overall notes:

- 1) Write it on paper/on a word document before you touch Grantium, this is because Grantium is a kafkaesque doomhole of a web platform and best approached with all the information ready to copy and paste into it.
- 2) Read through all of this guide before you fully plan out your project. The PG form has shifted because what they will or won't fund has shifted and you need to make sure that your project has enough meaningful engagement to get it funded (more on that later).

The best way to write a project grant is by writing from the perspective of the people who are watching or taking part in your work even if that is in the second stage of the project and the initial grant is for research and development.

Project grants are funded by National Lottery money - that is money that people spend, across the country on lottery tickets. These people, people who buy a lottery ticket in hope of riches or for the joy of daydreaming for a week about their life changing, these are the people that arts council funding should be reaching. The financial divide in this country is growing increasingly stark, and against that backdrop it feels increasingly uncomfortable to entertain people who do not need to feel the hope sometimes that buying a lottery ticket can bring. When planning your project it is helpful to bear this in mind as it is likely to echo the mindset of the person or people reading your completed bid.

Online Thesaurus

This tool is your friend. If you are stuck for a word to describe what you are going to do or the experience you want people to have, it will really help you.

Specific advice about the changes to project grants

The first half of the bid is about proving that your project is meaningful, viable and eligible for funding. The second part is about delving into why and how your project is going to make change in your community, for artists or across the arts.

Read the guidance

It's really important to at least scan through [the guidance](#). Not all of it will apply to you, but there's some really important information, particularly around budgets, partners and timeline.

WHAT?

What is your project? 50 word summary

Think of this as an "Elevator pitch" - if you were trapped in an elevator with someone and they asked about your project, how would you summarise it?

It's good to write in bullet points and do a mind map to work out what the most important parts of the project actually look like to allow you to summarise it. Share it as a message to your friends or post it on social media if you're feeling brave and ask if it makes sense. This summary is the hook, is this an interesting story?

WHAT pt 2 (but more what!)

This is where you need to prove that you are doing a project that fits into arts council criteria as you are proving eligibility. Keep it clear and cover in the following order;

- 1) What is your project? (You can repeat yourself here)
- 2) What will happen?
- 3) Who is it aimed at?
- 4) How is your project developing and delivering excellence? - Translate this as 'why is it great?'

An Example

I've used bullet points because I find them helpful but it is completely up to you. I tend to do a draft in bullet points and then write normal text.

My Project ; Raising Dragons

- *I am applying for funding in order to design and develop a puppet show where young people will "hatch" and create dragon puppets. This is the next stage of an existing RnD in which we worked with young people to design their inner monsters.*
- *The work will happen in two parts; 1) a series of public facing workshops where we collectively create and nurture dragons. 2) RnD of a show, ending with a preview performance.*

- *This work is aimed at 10-13yr olds who have struggled emotionally over the pandemic, using creativity to support mental health.*
- *We will be offering a creative and therapeutic outlet to young people who have really struggled with the isolation and lack of creativity brought on by the pandemic. We will also build a high quality tourable show that will be affordable for widespread rural touring*

Note it took me three edits to make this fit 800 characters, so remember you will have to go through and delete bits - there will be space for more detail later.

FEASIBILITY AND RISK

This is a section where they want to see that you understand how your project might fail and what steps you are going to take to make sure it works. They will be judging if your project seems realistic and if you come across as being capable of running it. If you are reasonably inexperienced it would be sensible to have a mentor in place. A good starting point would be to get a large piece of paper and do an exercise called **Consequence Mapping**. Here is how it works.

- 1) Get a BIG piece of paper
- 2) Write what you want to do in the middle
- 3) What good things might happen?
- 4) What bad things might happen?
- 5) What might the consequences of these things be (good and bad)?
- 6) How likely are the consequences and what will you do to mitigate them?

Consequences and mitigation may look like the following:

My project; Raising Dragon

Negative consequence: *I fail to get any kids to join the workshops and they are empty. Is this likely? Yes, because it's hard to get kids who are shy and withdrawn to go to new things.*

Mitigation: *I partner up with a local community organisation who regularly work with the kids I want to reach and will set up and recruit for the workshops for me.*

This is a good exercise to spend some time on as it will help you with the rest of the application process.

BUDGETS AND PROJECT PLANNING

It's good practice to write all of this out on a separate sheet and read through the guidance carefully. Don't worry if your project plan and or budget changes as you develop and run your project. These parts are there to help ACE understand your project and make sure you are capable of planning and budgeting an artistic project. These are the things that you should check:

- Whether the budget is appropriate for the scale and type of activity;
i.e. Are you paying fair wages? You can look up general rates of pay here:

[Rates of Pay & Agreements - UK Theatre](#)

I would use these as a minimum, especially if you are involving people for only one or two days. If you are delivering public facing workshops or performances a fee between £250-£300 a day would be generally appropriate.

Don't promise too much

We naturally all do this - as we really really want to bring our artistic ideas to life! But not only will it massively increase your chances of the project failing if you do not pay yourself or others a fair wage, but it will also lessen your chances of receiving funding as your project will look unfeasible.

If the areas of income and spending are appropriate - e.g I don't think that ACE is going to consider a two week "wellness retreat" in Goa a sensible use of artistic funds. You can buy a kit with ACE money but it needs to be sensible and reasonable and clearly linked to the project. ACE would much rather spend money on people's time than materials.

Have quotes for assets/equipment been appropriately researched for any purchases?

By this they are not asking you for quotes that are correct to the penny - it's ok to have a budget with rough amounts for each area, but it does mean that for larger purchases (A set build for example) You have spoken to and gathered rough costs from someone who is experienced in that field.

Match funding and money

It's good to find other sources of funding for your project, even if it's just a few hundred pounds. This can include sponsorship, Kickstarters, ticket sales or show bookings. Just make sure these ideas are realistic.

Support in kind can also be a good way of securing match funding. Support in kind can include: Loans of kit or equipment, use of rehearsal or workshop space, your or others time or use of venues.

Managing budgets

Are appropriate financial controls in place? I.e. is the money going into a business bank account, have you got a spreadsheet of costs? The more you are asking for, the more important this section is. Do you, or the people you're working with, have the necessary skills to manage the budget? If you feel like you are relatively inexperienced at this, find a mentor or someone with experience to help you, and explain what this support will look like.

Project plans

- Keep this simple, it's ok if things change later - that's life!
- It's ok to make your project part time, to fit around work, childcare or other commitments
- Make sure you embed evaluation into the project plan at each point, from planning onwards

The point of this part is to check that you know how to run a project so include:

- Time for planning
- Recruitment of artists, performers or participants
- Research and development time (and a quick evaluation)
- Build or rehearsal time
- Workshops or outwards facing work (and a quick evaluation)
- Previews or performances
- Final evaluation and admin

Note:

- Dates are not important - except start and end dates!
- Make sure your start date is ideally at least two weeks after the latest you could expect to hear back from ACE - it takes at least that to get paid.
- Make sure your finish date is sensible - you can always extend the project if you need.
- You will only receive the last 10% of your money from ACE once your final evaluation is submitted.
- It's ok for projects to take at least six months - but if it's over a year, explain why.

Lets Create Strategy - Your Project and the outcomes

For each strand you have up to 1500 characters (that's around 350 words to talk about how your project fits within these strategies.) You do not have to fill out each box but it's a great place to go into more detail about why you are doing what you are doing and what the end results might look like.

CREATIVE PEOPLE

This is a place to talk about outreach, who will see your work? How will it make them feel? What experience will people have? How will you reach them? Are there any long term aims for the project? What are these?

Make sure you can clearly identify where the people who engage with your project are coming from and how you are going to make sure that people from a wide range of backgrounds are getting involved - i.e. not just the people who often go to the theatre (remember where the lottery ticket money comes from.)

**Is your project exploring new ways of getting people involved?
Does it inspire individuals to be creative or go into a creative career?
Arts education in schools? Make sure you have confirmed with the
school!
Arts opportunities out of schools?
Opportunities for people of all ages to be creative in the community
Pathways into the industry?
Developing creative skills?**

An Example

My project; Raising Dragons.

We are working with small groups to provide impactful cultural engagement. We hope that after the sessions the participants will feel more confident and be able to talk in front of a group.

We need to explain how your project works with these communities, involving them in co-creation of her project so the impact is greater. I.e. We will work with a specific local youth group/school to pinpoint the kids who will get the most out of the project and before we start the workshops we will design the theme and structure of the workshops at least partially with these kids.

They will get involved in making puppets for the show as well as theatre and discussion workshops.

I would specifically mention if the R&D will involve Early Years/children/young people workshops and if these are inside or outside of school.

CULTURAL COMMUNITY

This is a space to talk about the long term impact of your project, will there be a lasting impact and what might that look like?

Tips:

- Project partners or really strong community links are important here. As well as talking about using the arts to tackle systemic inequalities; i.e. again your work needs to reach people who really need it.
- It's okay for your project to be a first step in a longer term plan to create more cultural activities in your area.
- It's also good in this section to talk about the networks of artists and performers that will be formed and supported by this project. When planning your project make sure that you are focusing some time and resources on working with communities to understand their needs.
- Cultural engagement can sound like jargon but it really equals social benefit.
- How does your project affect the people that you work with? Does it: improve education, improve health and wellbeing.
- Build skills - grow capacity in cultural sector and its economic impact
- Connecting people and places including diaspora communities nationally and internationally.
- There are specific spaces in the [south west that are priorities](#) for funding. Working or touring these areas will increase the chances of your project getting funded.

A CREATIVE AND CULTURAL COUNTRY

This covers all projects that are either going to tour - i.e. Nationally excellent work, going to spaces that otherwise could not afford to book it, or work that pushes the boundaries of your art practice/looks at new ways of working. This can involve development for you or the artists you are working with. Trialling new technology is a win, although making work that you can watch online (hybrid work) is getting a bit boring.

This is a good section to talk about your more complex artistic concepts. This is also a space where you can talk about opportunities for people to start/continue a creative career. Especially people underrepresented in the arts, due to background, money issues, experience of disability, neurodiversity, needing to care for others and so forth. Opportunities to sustain arts careers, by making

work that is affordable to tour is also something that is worth talking about in this section. Part of a realistic vision of a creative and cultural country is a space where people from all backgrounds are heard, not just a majority of white, middle class voices.

INVESTMENT PRINCIPLES

This is very prescriptive, but has clear prompts in the guidance; read the guidance for this bit!

This is about you and your company. It gives you space to go more in depth into your project and reveals the motivations behind doing what you plan to do. It is about goals and targets - quantifying and expressing why you are planning to do the project in the way you are planning to do it. This is the space for detail.

As in the last section each principle has a 1500 character count and you do not have to answer each question, but I would suggest trying to answer as many as you can, and looking at these principles as you design your project. How you will evaluate your project is peppered throughout these four questions, make sure you think carefully about evaluation.

AMBITION AND QUALITY

Understanding what others think

If you are taking steps to understand what people (audiences, participants, co-creators, customers, peers, staff, or other people) think about your work and how you make it, tell us about it here

Things to add here include;

Who is your specific target audience and how will you reach them? E.g:

'I will measure success on this project on the number of 8-12yr olds I manage to reach and their feedback on the experience they will have. I am hoping to reach at least 30 8-12 yr olds and I will get their feedback by asking them to record a voice message and/or do a drawing at the end of each session.'

'I will reach participants on the project by (...). and I will ask them how often they attend arts events to get an understanding of how many of them are regular attendees of arts events. If I am struggling to recruit participants who do not often attend artistic work (*this is code for - if only middle class kids are*

attending my workshops) I will approach local community groups etc etc to see if they can help me reach out further into the community.'

What is meaningful engagement?

This is not 'They watched a show'. This is - 'hey learnt something' 'They had opportunities to feel creative' 'They got inspired', or 'They came away feeling better emotionally'.

What makes this project something vital? Unusual? Special? This needs to be in the heart of your project, not just tacked on!

DEVELOPING YOUR WORK

If this project aims to develop your skills (and those you work with) and contribute to your longer-term ambitions for strengthening the quality of your work, tell us about it here.

Think about:

- What skills and knowledge will this project give to you and your team?
- Will it allow you to make a living long term? Great! say that.
- Will you develop skills in financial management, working with venues, engaging communities, leading a small creative team? Say this here.
- Set specific measurements on what "success" might look like. For example if 70% or more people would recommend her show or workshop to a friend then you are doing well. Think about how you'll track how well you're doing, and how well your project has been received.
- Measuring your progress. This is another place to talk about how you will reach your audience and what you will do with feedback - think here about what learning you might get from the feedback and what you could do with that long term.
- What will people who experience your work get?
- Collecting written feedback from all partners - venue, community, creatives working on the project, both in the middle and at the end of the project and setting out how you might use this to adapt your project/future plans.
- If your project is RnD, talk about how you will reach audiences in the future.

DYNAMISM

The way you work. If you are testing your organisation's model or your individual practice to ensure you can account for change, or adjust when things do not go as planned, tell us about it here.

This section is about making a project that is adaptable. This is especially important if you are working on RnD projects without a fixed agenda talk about mentoring/shifting/planning/adapting

- Where will you take this project after this point?
- What are the most ambitious parts of your project?
- How will you shift things if these fail (its ok to fail)

Developing people

If you plan to develop you/your organisation's skills and knowledge tell us about it here.

Technology and data

If you are using technology and/or data and evidence to deliver and develop your project, and assess its impact, tell us about it here.

There's some cross over here with other Principles. It's worth discussing the change that subsidy will bring to a business model now and in the future. Does this open new opportunities?

Skills and knowledge

Is this project going to support you to; Set up a company? Form a group or arts collective? Design a new way of making or performing work with others?

Use of audience data

What are you going to do with the information from your feedback forms (again!)

INCLUSIVITY AND RELEVANCE

This section is very important!

Communities

Tell us who you want to reach with this project, how you have identified them, and how they have been involved in the planning and/or creative process

- Tell us about the steps will you take to make sure your project is open and accessible to people within the communities you plan to work with- again this is all about HOW you reach people

Workforce

- How you will ensure they reflect the communities you wish to reach.
- How you will make sure access to opportunities are open and accessible
- This is about how you will recruit people in a meaningful way.

Creative Case for Diversity

The Creative Case for Diversity is a way of exploring how arts and cultural organisations and artists can enrich the work they do by embracing a wide range of influences and practices. We believe that embracing the Creative Case helps arts and cultural organisations not only enrich their work, but also address other challenges and opportunities in audience development, public engagement, workforce and leadership, and collections development in museums. Our funded organisations are expected to show how they contribute to the Creative Case for Diversity through the work they produce, present and collect.

How does it address the Creative Case for diversity

- Name specific community groups - you are in contact with them, their support for the project e.g. any support in kind.
- Describe the R&D audiences plus any audiences you aim to reach in the future as the piece develops.
- How will these groups/audiences be involved in the project planning and/or creative process?
- How do you know your project is going to be accessible for those you intend to include?
- Describe your approach to recruiting, think about reflecting the community you wish to reach.
- Consider the Creative Case for Diversity from an audience or workforce perspective or both. You can describe her own gender/ethnicity/disability if relevant.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Using data - This seems very confusing, but there are good resources to help with this - starting with the Theatre Green Book.

Plan, action, change

Start by planning to keep your environmental impact proportional to the scale of her activity.

You can do this by:

- Using recycled/scrap materials/Using set swap cycle or other reuse resources for set (remember this doesn't always make set cheaper as adapting/reusing set takes time)
- Measuring the impact of travel on your project - working out emissions for the creative team, participants and audience to access your project.
- By the end of the project you will have a benchmark figure, gathered from feedback surveys, on how people have travelled to your events and from this you can calculate emissions. This gives you targets for carbon offsetting activities for future projects.

ADVOCACY, EDUCATION AND INFLUENCE

If you are working on a project that involves or deals with environmental sustainability talk about it here. If you plan to develop you, or your organisation's skills and knowledge on environmental responsibility, tell us about it here. I.e;

- 'I will spend some of this time reading the Green Theatre book and will attend an online workshop advising on this as part of this project.'
- 'I will work with a puppetry designer/maker who uses at least 50% recycled materials as part of this project.'
- 'I will loan and lend out sets and equipment to others as part of this project.'

WELL DONE FOR GETTING THIS FAR!

There's no denying it, ACE applications are a right mission. But they are useful too. It helps you really map out and plan your project which can stop you going off on one! It also gives you a finance structure. Most importantly, it gives you the space to consider carefully the project from the point of view of the people you are working with, and this can be simple but groundbreaking.

YOU CAN DO THIS!

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