

RURAL/URBAN CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT GRANTS APPLICATION FOR 30TH AUGUST 2018 EXECUTIVE :

Applicant : Playbox Theatre Limited

Description of scheme: The Playbox Dream Factory was designed and built in 1998, since that time the building has been in constant use with growing numbers of participants and a wide variety of creative services, however, after 20 years the technology, fabric and furnishings are in urgent need of replacement and the use of space needs to be improved. Playbox Theatre has developed a multi-phase redevelopment (Playbox Futures Initiative 2018) to ensure it is fit for purpose and sustainable for the next 25 years. These 'stand-alone' phases are as follows:

- Phase 1 - Technical infrastructure upgrade (RUCIS application)
- Phase 2 - Building Refurbishment and Modernisation (Arts Council England)
- Phase 3 - New Digital Studio development (Arts Council England)

This RUCIS grant application is for the Phase 1 project; this will include lighting, sound and AV equipment to replace failing and outdated equipment. The purchase of modern video and digital equipment will add significant value to Playbox members' skills base and broaden the range of courses that can be offered, it will also modernise the quality of experience expected from families and audiences. Specific technical equipment will include:

- Sound Desk replaced with Allen & Heath SQ-6 which also replaces the installed sound cabling infrastructure with a network based system
- Lighting desk replaced with an updated model and touch-screen monitors
- Lighting fixture upgrade, replacing 1990s tungsten fixtures with energy efficient LED replacements
- Associated power distribution equipment and cabling
- Adding a QLab computer and QLab software license to handle show control and sound/video playback capabilities.
- Adding a large format video projector with suitable lens and flying frame
- Office server, PC and telecom upgrade.

Evidence of need: A careers survey from Playbox members' external audition results (2017) identified the need to include digital media training, skills and experience within Playbox's provision; those applying for screenbased production positions and courses had 10% success rate, those applying for theatre-based production positions and courses had 50% success rate. The inclusion of new digital studios will enhance skill sets, increase career opportunities, and improve individual performance capabilities. Additionally:

- The existing lighting, sound and projection equipment is getting to the end of its reliable and useful life and now needs to be replaced; additional costs are being incurred when present equipment is failing at critical moments and equipment has to be hired at the last minute
- Ageing lighting lanterns are becoming increasingly hard to maintain to a safe standard; with the current Strand Brio profile lanterns (which are approximately 20 years old) there are problems with the plastic of the cable clamps becoming brittle from heat and age, meaning a PAT test fail. The stock of fresnel lanterns also suffers similarly, plus these have an issue where the silvering on the main reflector is flaking off, now also an obsolete part
- Playbox's main sound desk is from the late 1990's, it was originally 24 channels, currently 6 channels are faulty and the spare parts to replace are no longer manufactured
- The main lighting desk is reaching the end of product support early next year (estimated at 10-12 years old) and as a 'mission critical' piece of equipment needs to be supported. Going forward, new developments in the lighting industry will not be supported by the current desk due to the end of software development
- EU legislation is requiring lighting infrastructure improvements particularly to reflect health & safety and energy efficiency standards; all stage lighting will have to meet new energy efficiency targets which will require the replacement of the majority of the lighting rigs by 2020

A letter from 'Friends of Playbox' has been provided which details their support for the project and their fundraising commitment towards this.

3 years accounts received?

2014 to 2016 accounts have been received along with a draft copy of the profit & loss for 2017 (partial 11 months to November 2017) and also bank statements for both Playbox Theatre (dated 30th April 2018) and the "Friends of Playbox" group (dated 2nd May 2018)

Financial Performance; minus figure = deficit

Year ended	Year ended	Year ended	Year ended
31/12/17 (draft accounts)	31/12/16	31/12/15	31/12/14
-£11,390	£9,375	£14,031	£11,820

Available Funds (cash and reserves)

Year ended	Year ended	Year ended	Year ended
31/12/17 (draft accounts)	31/12/16	31/12/15	31/12/14
£24,489	£319	£3	£3

* In the 2014 to 2016 Annual Accounts provided, within the 1.1 Accounting Convention section, it notes "Although the company is technically insolvent, the accounts have been prepared on a going basis. The company has now been trading in excess of five years and the Directors believe they will be able to generate more income and obtain further grants in order to enable the Company to operate at least at break even level in the future." The draft 2017 accounts provided do not contain this note.

Details of membership, fees etc:

Playbox Sessions run in line with Warwickshire school term dates, members register for a specific course for the minimum of a term, fees for regular Playbox sessions:

- Acting / Theatre for Under 5's - £105
- Musical Theatre, Circus, Film & Digital, Shakespeare, Technical Theatre - £150
- Voice & The Young Actor - £120

Playbox also runs activities during school holidays for children aged 3 to 18:

- Holiday Projects: £30 to £45 per day course.

Spaces at The Dream Factory, including the main theatre space, studio, meeting room, front-of-house area with grand piano and pre-school room are available for hire when not in use:

- Venue hire costs; from £25 per hour
- Ad-hoc events; birthday Parties from £295, education workshops from £200

Details of usage:

Playbox Theatre is open 52 weeks a year, its training is far reaching, offering programmes and activities for young people (aged 3 to 25 years) to explore many art forms including acting, circus, musical theatre, Shakespeare, physical theatre, voice, technical and digital media. These techniques are approached through workshops, rehearsals, masterclasses and performances throughout the year. The theatre also includes a destination café with a welcoming family focus, open to all, increasingly used by local residents, visitors to Warwick and those who work locally. Examples of usage 2017/2018:

- Playbox Theatre Open Access Projects – opportunities beyond their registered membership include Holiday Courses, Magic Carpet Storytelling, Birthday Parties, Open Days, Open Workshops and Special Events. For example; Holiday Projects - 93 days of Holiday Projects per annum with an average of 25 participants each day making a total of 2325 participants, Interactive Parties approx. 85 per annum with an average of 20 children at each making a total of 1,700 participants
 - Educational programmes including visits from international students; 58 workshops with average of 25 participants, approx. 1,450 students
 - Playbox Theatre workshops exist for registered members of the company; 40 regular weekly workshops, an average of 25 members per group x 36 weeks per year approx. 36,000 member visits per year
 - 10 major productions are staged each year; these performances are staged in a range of spaces at the theatre including The Main House (184 seats), Studio (40 seats) and Rendezvous (100 seats). For example; Starry Nights - 200 participants / 4 performances / 720 audience members, A Midsummer Night's Dream - 35 participants / 5 performances / 700 audience members
 - Studio productions by Alumni and Senior Playbox Members x10
 - Venue hire / regular bookings. All facilities are available for hire, for example; 'Andy Booth Presents' (local choir), ILEAP Spot drama club (ILEAP Charity is for people with Additional Needs)
- Access and Parking; There was a drop in attendance of daytime activities last year due to the change in parking / access with Aylesford School, the recently agreed WDC loan to provide a new access road and car parking (which is being built at present - July 2018) will improve the drop off zone for parents, visitors and café customers and provide sufficient staff parking and delivery bays. On completion of the access road (August 2018) and the improved parking Playbox Theatre anticipate increased daytime footfall in the café and increased membership numbers for workshops, events and box office bookings compared to last year.

**Details of
Organisations
equalities policies:**

Playbox Theatre have provided a copy of their Equality and Diversity Statement, highlights include:

- Create Diversity; a range of inclusive artistic approaches and the rejection of a single dominant aesthetic
- Workforce Diversity; the recruitment of staff across the organisation representative of gender, race, religion, sexuality and education
- Market Diversity; their hope is to reach all sectors of our communities as they reject exclusion of any groups, communities and individuals
- Young people at Playbox are not restricted by sexual, race and gender diversity; their aim is to continue being a welcoming, inclusive and safe haven for all young people
- Aspiration to diversity audiences and participants is developed through local relationships, education partnerships and the welcoming of international groups to the theatre

3 quotes provided:

Yes; a total of 13 quotes have been provided covering all aspects of the project works

**Which of the Council's
Corporate Priorities are
met?**
Evidence
**Reduce anti-social
behaviour**

A wide range of positive and motivational programs are offered throughout the year; during the day and evenings. Using arts as a creative springboard Playbox endeavour to ensure young people emerge more confident, articulate, imaginative and engaged within our society. With the inclusion of modern video, digital equipment and editing suite it will broaden the appeal and build upon the interests and experience of young people and diversify the range of Playbox members and participants. Playbox also works with schools and colleges, arts and community centres, volunteer organisations and home educated groups on projects to meet specific learning outcomes and encourage engagement and participation at a variety of levels, for example; collaboration with Warwickshire County Council Fire Department & Artzone to develop anti-arson schools' tour 'ACT'. This all helps to reduce anti-social behaviour.

**Reducing obesity,
particularly in children**

Playbox Theatre participants are aged between 3 to 25 years, a wide selection of programs are offered during term time and school holidays which engage young people in active, energetic and creative activities, for example; acting, circus, musical theatre, Shakespeare, physical theatre, set production. The modernisation and upgrading of the equipment and the inclusion of digital media ensures a wide range of activities, workshops and productions can continue to be provided. For example:

- Theatre training is a lively and group based approach including mime, movement, role-play, improvisation, acting, voice and self-expression
- Little Apple Circus for 5 to 7 year olds includes; juggling with scarves, balls and hoops, trapeze and aerial hoop, acrobatics (tumbling and acro-balance), clowning and cycling
- Musical theatre is a dynamic course incorporating techniques in music and dance, group and solo singing, different styles and choreography to stage a wide range of musicals

This all helps to reduce obesity, particularly in children.

**Increase opportunities
for everyone to enjoy
and participate in
sports, arts and
cultural activities**

A broad range of programs are offered from acting and performance to technical support skills, for example; stage production, set construction and sound design with industry standard equipment. Through replacing/upgrading sound and lighting equipment that is now at the end of its life span, the Technical Infrastructure Project will ensure that the arts activities currently available for the community are maintained. The addition of new video and media equipment will extend the range of provision offered and broaden the target group; this will increase opportunities for the community to enjoy and participate in digital, performance and other arts activities.

Engaging and strengthening communities

Playbox Theatre provides a safe place for young people to come together, work together, learn together and mature as confident, capable young citizens. As an arts organisation dedicated to working with young people they seek to reflect through their content and programming, issues reflecting our contemporary society with the intention to encourage, support and be a welcoming, inclusive safe haven for all young people. Playbox have worked with playgroups, primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, community centres, nursing homes, Scouts and Guides Associations, literary festivals and teacher training conferences providing opportunities to engage communities in the arts. Volunteers are an important part of Playbox and put in a huge number of hours each year:

- Total number of volunteers 702
- Total number of volunteer hours 5640

The "Friends of Playbox" group is Playbox Theatre's charity body for everyone wishing to directly support the work with young people; they hold fundraising events, social programmes, out-of-the-building events and get-togethers raising much needed funds for projects. Last year "The Friends" donated funds to production costs and enabled the company to stage larger musical theatre works, this year they are fund raising for the Playbox Futures Initiative project and have already raised nearly £10,000; the engagement and commitment of the "Friends of Playbox" and all the volunteers engages and strengthens the community.

Total cost of scheme (excluding VAT)

58,812

VAT will be claimed back, therefore award is excluding VAT; will initially be paid from cash reserves, these funds have been evidenced by the recent bank statement provided

Funded by:

Status

Organisations Own Funds

£17,556

Friends of Playbox Theatre

£9,890

Bishop's Tachbrook Parish Council

£1,960

Application made, waiting for a decision

Total RUCIS

£29,406

equates to

50.0%