

National Theatre

Strategic Touring Partnerships **Call for research proposals**

The National Theatre is launching a three-year, in-depth programme focused in six areas of England, aiming to grow audiences and develop engagement in theatre. Working with local partners, communities and audiences, the programme will encompass large and mid-scale touring, digital and broadcast activity, an extensive learning programme, sustained community projects with people of all ages and an audience development research project. We will develop these partnerships in six areas, in each case working with a lead venue partner or partners and building a wider network of relationships across the city and region.

The areas are:

- Doncaster, in partnership with Cast
- The Greater Manchester metropolitan area in partnership with The Lowry, Salford
- Outer East London with the Queen's Theatre Hornchurch
- Sunderland, in partnership with the Empire Theatre and Fire Station
- Wakefield, in partnership with the Theatre Royal
- Wolverhampton with the Grand Theatre

As well as these venue partners, we will work closely with a wide range of local and regional partners including Bridge organisations, Cultural Education Partnerships, other local arts organisations and venues and community partners.

The programme runs for three years from September 2017. It is supported by a grant of £1.16m from Arts Council England's Strategic Touring Fund, representing around 40% of the total cost, with additional support from the The Sackler Trust and Bloomberg Philanthropies. These plans are a key part of the NT's wider objective to support theatre and reach new audiences across the UK through our touring, digital and broadcast and education initiatives. We intend that learning from the six in-depth partnerships will inform our future strategies for national work.

Research focus

The partnership programme is a new initiative for the NT. It aims to join up the diverse strands of our nationwide work, across touring at different scales, broadcasting, learning programmes and audience development, and to work with a lead venue partner and other local cultural, education and other partners across these areas of activity over a sustained period to develop local audiences and local engagement in theatre.

Underpinning the programme is a question about how a national organisation can most effectively work with partners to develop audiences and contribute to local strategic priorities for widening engagement in the arts – and, in turn, how those partnerships can contribute to the NT's strategic priorities for its nationwide work.

The NT is seeking to appoint an independent researcher, HEI or other research organisation to work with us, the lead partner venues and other partners over the three years to explore this question. The research will provide an external perspective and context for the programme and report on the process and outcomes of the work. The researcher's findings will feed into our annual reports to the Arts Council and other funders, although the key outcome will be a public report. We anticipate an interim report at the mid-point of the programme for partners and funders, and a full public report to be published by the NT after the end of the full programme in autumn 2020 and presented at a conference to share findings with the wider theatre touring sector.

We expect to develop the scope of the research with the appointed partner and that the scope will in part respond to their areas of interest and research expertise; however, we would like the researcher to explore the following areas:

- The impact of joint activity between the NT and local partners on audience development and local engagement in theatre. We envisage a qualitative research programme exploring engagement, participation and attitudes among different types of audiences and participants, including schools and new audiences
- How far the NT's activities have contributed to local strategies and priorities for the arts and other related areas e.g. placemaking and cultural regeneration
- The relationship between the NT and local partners – strengths and weaknesses, lessons learned, and outcomes, including the impact of the programme on the National Theatre and its national remit

The research needs to cover all six partnerships to some level, however we would be happy to explore an approach which looks more deeply at a smaller number of the partner areas. As well as their own research, the researcher will also be able to draw on the following additional sources:

- Quantitative audience research, carried out by Audiences London
- Research into the crossover between NT Live and live theatre audiences, in partnership with NESTA
- Evaluation of individual strands of the learning programme by responsible staff – with scope for the researcher to contribute to the design of the evaluation
- A planned public blog on the project by partners, participants and NT staff
- The NT's dedicated Data Studio to support large-scale surveying and data analysis

We also hope that the researcher will be able to draw on findings from other research across the fields of cultural policy and audience research to inform the report.

Budget

The budget for research is £35,000 over the three year period, to include the publication of the report.

Proposals

The NT is particularly interested in proposals from researchers in Higher Education institutions outside London with experience in this field.

For an informal discussion with one of the NT team please contact San Malhi, PA to the Executive Director on smalhi@nationaltheatre.org.uk or 020 7452 3575.

Please send expressions of interest to Alice King-Farlow, Director of Learning, by Friday 6 October, at akfarlow@nationaltheatre.org.uk.

These should including a paragraph explaining what particular strengths and experience you would bring to the research, a brief outline of your proposed approach, links to recent research in this field and a CV or biography for the lead researcher. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to develop a more detailed proposal including proposed methodology and a breakdown of the how the budget will be used.

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30 August 2017