

Stage One Bursary Application Guidelines

Stage One's Bursary scheme exists to support independent commercial theatre producers. Unlike other grants or funding, its primary aim is to help develop *you* and your commercial producing career, rather than primarily supporting production and project costs.

The Bursary is a grant awarded to independent theatre producers who have proven they are on a clear trajectory of development within the commercial industry.

When applying to the Bursary, we want you to tell us:

- Who you are and what your producing career looks like now,
- What your commercial producing aspirations are, including the commercial viability of your project/s
- At this point in your career, how you will use the money we grant you to help you achieve those aspirations.

We define what we mean by a commercial theatre producer [on our website](#).

The award comprises of 3 parts:

1.) Financial Award – Producers may apply for up to £20,000 to support your development as an independent commercial theatre producer. *See below for more details on the financial award.*

2.) Training & Mentoring – You will work with the Stage One Team to find an experienced professional to mentor you during the time you are receiving support from Stage One.

The mentor will be available for consultation and advice, they will also sign off on your monthly report and invoices to Stage One.

Further training through Stage One is also provided free of charge on specific topics relevant to your practice. We can support travel and access costs for these training sessions, separate to your bursary award.

3.) Office Space – A shared office space in London is available for one year for bursary recipients to use during office hours. The office is in Bloomsbury Square, London.

***Clintons Support** – *We also have been offered in kind support from the theatre team at Clintons to provide free legal support to producers who the panel feel are in need of it to get to the next stage. This support is entirely up to the discretion of the panel. Those who are being offered this support will be contacted by the Stage One team post interview.*

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More Details about the Financial Award

This is the main part of the Bursary Award.

You can apply for up to £20,000, but note the interview panel may decide to only fund aspects of your application, and awards of the full £20,000 in one go are very rare.

In your application, you'll be asked to provide a rough breakdown of how you'll spend your grant. This is split into two categories:

Personal Costs: This should make up the majority of the funds applied for. By personal costs, we mean anything which will support *you*, such as; travel costs, bills, rent/ mortgage payments, childcare, access support etc. Some producers prefer just to categorise this as their 'day rate'. It may be easiest to think of this category as the money which will allow you to produce to the best of your ability. This is the money you will invest in yourself to be able to dedicate more time to commercial theatre producing, and thus develop your career.

Project Costs: We recognise some producers will also want to dedicate some money to their project, which by extension will develop their career. The project/s you work on during your bursary period should be intended to create live theatre in the UK, which can encompass a variety of related activities including workshops, try-outs and R&D activity. Project costs might include rights advances, commissioning fees, writers' options, paying creatives for R&D performances and company costs.

It is imperative that you have the legal right/option to work on the projects you are applying for. If you are unsure whether you have this or not please do get in touch with the team who can advise.

**Keep in mind we can support costs for the rights with a bursary, it just needs to be clear that you have had the conversations, and your next step is to put the money forwards for them.*

Who are We Looking For?

We want to support those developing their careers as independent commercial producers with an ambition to produce commercial work.

In an application, we are looking for you to clearly tell us about:

- A summary of your experience in theatre producing so far
- Your key aspirations as an independent theatre producer, specifically in the commercial sector
- An outline of the commercial plan for your project/s
- Why you are applying for a bursary now and how it will elevate your commercial theatre producing career.

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- Whether you have the legal right/option to work on the projects you are applying for; and if not, what your plans are to obtain them.

When shortlisting and interviewing candidates, we use this criteria to guide the progress of your application.

You may have project/s in the pipeline, and you just need the means to get them off the ground.

You might know your project/s will begin to flourish if you had more time to dedicate to them, and you need to reduce other work to do this.

We are aware that people often fill multiple roles in a production (writer, director, actor, etc.) alongside producing, but you primarily need to be the producer on the projects you are applying for support for.

You may have experience producing small to mid-scale shows in the UK and are looking to scale up.

We want to hear from people who are dedicated to becoming independent commercial theatre producers, who can demonstrate their independence as a producer, and who would like to begin or continue a long-term relationship with Stage One.

We believe that everyone has the right to see themselves and their stories being represented in theatre. The role of a theatre producer is integral to seeing a range of truthful and authentic stories being told. We are dedicated to supporting those who have faced barriers in their career so far and will prioritise applications from those who are from underrepresented groups in the industry.

Eligibility

Applicants must be over 18 years of age. There is no upper age limit to apply to any of Stage One's programmes.

Applicants must be UK-based and intend for the work to be produced in the UK.

Applicants must have the right to work in the UK.

What a Bursary can't support:

This programme is not intended for those who are at the very start of their career – get in touch with us to discuss our other programmes.

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The fund cannot support projects at their earliest stages. There **must** be a rights agreement, or evidence of the intent to produce with the rights holders.

The Bursary is not intended to cover the full cost of a workshop, try out or production.

It is intended to supplement the producers' salary to allow individuals time to work on a project, not intended as a full salary itself. We do not intend the bursary to be your only income.

You won't be eligible to apply if you are an established producer with significant experience within the commercial sector.

We cannot fund you if you primarily want to work in theatre as an actor, writer or director – all of Stage One's work is centred around being a commercial theatre producer.

FAQs

What is a commercial theatre producer?

Take a look at our website! [What is a Theatre Producer?](#)

In essence, a theatre producer develops a project for the stage from inception to the delivery of a show in front of an audience. What distinguishes a commercial theatre producer is a producer that delivers that model in a way that can be run as a profitable business.

What do you mean by having legal rights or an option agreement for my show?

This means having the legal rights to a play, or other intellectual rights in a property, in a certain territory over a certain period. These may be taken out prospectively in advance of a particular theatre or dates being confirmed, to preclude others from pursuing the same project. Also rights are sometimes required where a producer plans to adapt or develop a show based on copyrighted source material.

**Keep in mind we can support costs for the rights with a bursary, it just needs to be clear that you have had the conversations, and your next step is to put the money forwards for them.*

Am I at the right stage in my career to apply? Is my project developed enough?

The bursary scheme is to support emerging producers. For us, an emerging producer is not yet established in the industry and is relatively early career. They will have some experience producing shows and are looking to build more experience and contacts within the industry.

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The bursary scheme is open to any age group. The programme also aims diversify the current field of theatre producers and therefore strongly encourages individuals from underrepresented backgrounds to apply.

How long will the bursary support me for?

We open bursary applications twice a year, and each application is roughly intended to cover 6 months of the producers' time. This is however flexible and intended as a guide. Please note the third aspect of the bursary support (office space) lasts for one year.

What happens if I'm successful in getting a bursary?

Successful candidates will have an initial meeting with Stage One to discuss the logistics of the bursary and answer any questions. We will also start the process of matching you with a mentor. Producers will invoice for funds on a schedule which suits them – note we advise that you do not invoice for your funds in one lump sum. With each invoice, you will be required to submit a report form to detail your progress and how the money is being used. This is to be discussed and signed off in conjunction with your mentor, who will need to also approve the payment of each invoice. We don't require receipts, proof of purchase or a specific financial reporting form.

How is the bursary scheme funded?

The Bursary Scheme is generously supported Theatre Development Trust, Walt Disney Company Ltd, AKA, SEE tickets, Ray Cooney Plays, Nyman Libson Paul, The Mackintosh Foundation, Moore Kingston Smith, The Underwood Trust, Shaftesbury Theatre, Andrew Treagus Associates LTD, The Garrick Trust, Eilene Davidson Productions, Littlestar Services Ltd and Tysers Retail Limited.

How do 'Top Ups' work?

Top Ups are subsequent awards which follow your first bursary award. If you have not received the full £20,000 for your initial bursary, you will be eligible to apply for a Top Up at a later date. You can apply for a Top Up as many times as you like. The total amount you can be awarded is capped at £20,000.

For example: Ben applies for and receives £8,000 for his initial bursary. In subsequent bursary rounds, he is then therefore eligible to apply for up to £12,000. He applies for and receives a £7,000 Top Up. He then applies again for a £5,000 Top Up. The total money he has received from Stage One has now hit £20,000, so he cannot apply for a Top Up again.

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How do I apply?

Applications open twice a year – in the spring and autumn. You can apply via our website by signing up to our [Members' Area](#). You'll find the relevant application form here once applications open.

We recommend you draft your application in a separate document and input the information when you're ready to submit to avoid losing your work.

You will find more details about the application form, including a detailed description of what we look for in an application, below.

We welcome you to get in touch if applying via the website form isn't the best format for you. You can also apply via email by submitting a Word Doc application form, or by video or audio application. We may still ask you to submit a written budget, even if you would like to answer the written questions in an alternative format.

We will be hosting a Bursary Clinic on **Tuesday 8th July from 1-2pm on Zoom**. If you are planning on applying, we strongly encourage you to attend this session. This will be an opportunity to ask any questions about the Bursary and what you can apply for directly to our Chief Executive, Joseph Smith. **Please email enquiries@stageone.uk.com to register your interest.**

Any questions?

If you have any further questions about your eligibility or how the process works, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the team at enquiries@stageone.uk.com or by calling 0207 5576737.

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Sample Application Form

This is intended as a guide to help you demonstrate your skills, experience and aspirations in commercial theatre. Please consider the following guidance when you are writing your bursary application.

Section 1 – Basic Information

Name:

Pronouns:

Email address:

Phone number:

Where are you based?:

Total amount applying for:

Section 2 – You & Your Career

Please tell us about your career to date and your aspirations as an independent commercial theatre producer. (500 words)

We are looking for producers who have some experience in producing commercial theatre, or have experience in the subsidised sector who have a strong and clear aspiration to produce commercially.

We want to know more about your career to date, although remember you will also need to attach your CV to supplement your application. It may be relevant to note if you're currently working outside of theatre and would like to dedicate more time to independent producing.

The bursary focuses on commercial theatre producers, so we are looking for applicants who clearly have an aspiration to develop their career in commercial theatre. Strong applications therefore demonstrate a clear understanding of what commercial theatre is, and how they would like their career to develop within the commercial sector.

Remember, if successful you will be paired with a mentor and be offered additional training with Stage One – we can help you achieve your goals, but we would like to know what they are!

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Tell us why your project/s will support your career as a commercial theatre producer. (250 words)

This is your opportunity to tell us a bit more about your project/s and how you think they are commercially viable. Strong applicants will be clear in telling us how they see the project has potential in the commercial sector, and therefore how it will support their career development to produce the project/s.

If you're working on multiple projects or you are struggling to concisely demonstrate their commercial viability, it may be beneficial to choose the project you feel is most commercial to focus on.

We know that all projects take different journeys to become the shows we finally see onstage. Regardless of the current state of your project, could you please tell us about your aspirations for the project, and the commercial trajectory of your show(s).* (250 words)

This is your opportunity to dream big with your show. We want to hear more about where you see this particular project going. Think about if you had all the money, all the time and all the resources, where would you like to see your project play? On what stage or theatre? How many actors? Any casting in mind? Remember to keep commercial the focus of your answer.

Why are you applying to the Stage One bursary at this point in your career? (150 words)

We ultimately want to know why now. Why is it imperative to your commercial producing career that you receive this support now? This is your chance to make a case for this being a turning point in your career. We want to be excited by your potential development and know why our support will benefit you now.

Can you confirm that you have the legal rights/option to work on the projects you are applying for? (Please check one and provide additional notes if needed.)

Yes ☐

No ☐

Any Notes on this:

This is where we'd like to be sure you have some form of legal rights on paper for your project; if you don't, but are in the process of doing so, please explain in the notes section provided.

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Section 3 - Budget Breakdown

Personal Financial Support

Please tell us about the aspects of your application which will cover personal costs.

The majority of the application should be dedicated to covering personal costs which will enable you to develop and advance your career as an independent producer. This can include things like access costs, rent, childcare, travel etc. Please be clear about what you are spending this on and the timing of when you anticipate spending it.

Amount Applying For:	Support for:	Dates support designated for:	Notes
£			

In this section, we're looking for a clear and realistic breakdown of how you'll spend your bursary money and the timing of when you anticipate spending it. This is the money you will need to spend in order for you to dedicate more time to your commercial producing career.

Under 'Notes', we look for a brief explanation of how you'll use the money. This only needs to be a sentence or two, as you'll have more space to explain in the written questions below.

Project Financial Support

Please tell us about the aspects of your application which will cover project costs.

The project/s you work on during your bursary period should be intended to create live theatre, which can encompass a variety of related activities including workshops, try-outs and R&D activity. Project costs might include rights advances, commissioning fees, writers' options, paying creatives for R&D performances and company costs. Please be clear about what you are spending on and the timing for these projects.

Amount Applying For	Support for:	Dates support designated for:	Notes:

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£ _____			
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This section is for you to tell us about any project costs you may want to use your bursary for. As the focus of the bursary is on your personal career development, you do not need to include project costs, but some producers find it useful to dedicate some money towards up-front project costs. For example, you may need to pay a performer to take part in an R&D performance, or you need to pay for rights advances. Please be clear about what you are spending these funds on and the timing of your projects.

Under 'Notes', we look for a brief explanation of what the money is for and how it will advance the commercial viability of the project. Don't get too tied up on explaining these costs in full here – you will have an opportunity to expand on your project and its commercial viability in a question below.

Section 4 – Reference

We are asking for one professional referees to support your application. This can be your current/previous employers or a professional that can vouch for your dedication to producing theatre. They may be contacted should your application be forwarded for interview with the panel but not before.

Referee (Name, Job Title & Email Address):

Section 5 – Additional Information

This section is purely for our records and does not impact your application.

Have you applied for any Stage One schemes in the past? If so, please tell us which one/s?

How did you hear about this opportunity?

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Have you received any bursary awards from other organisations*? If so, please tell us which one/s?

Please click here to complete our **Equal Opportunities Form**. If you require this form in an alternative format, please contact enquiries@stageone.uk.com / 020 7557 6777

The provision of this information is optional, but we would really appreciate you filling in this form in order to make sure that we can do what we can to make sure that the theatre industry is widely represented.

Section 6 - Attachments

When submitting your application via email, please attach an up to date CV in a PDF format

By submitting your application to us, you are consenting to be added to a mailing list which only be used to contact you about the outcome of your application. We will not use this list to contact you at any other time.

Last Updated: July 2025

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