NETWORKING BURSARIES – NORTH WEST

For directors and theatre makers living and working in DCMS Culture Priority Places in the North West of England who are working class or from a low socio-economic background.

Our Networking Bursaries are designed to support reducing social and cultural capital barriers for mid-career directors and theatre makers who are working class or from a low socio-economic background.

Some people simply ‘know the right people’ either through family, school or university and have social connections with people working in the arts giving them an advantage in gaining opportunities and employment.

With our upcoming Class Assembly Greater Manchester event with Factory International next month, we’re continuing to deepen our connection to the region, and **we are offering five Networking Bursaries of £800 for directors and theatre makers who live and work in the DCMS Culture Priority Places in the North West** (Barrow in Furness, Blackburn and Darwen, Blackpool, Burnley, Copeland, Hyndburn, Knowsley, Pendle, Rochdale, Rossendale, Salford, St. Helens, Tameside, Wigan).

These bursaries are for directors and theatre makers who are working class or from low socio-economic backgrounds to grow their networks.

We’re really open to what the bursary is used for but at its heart the idea supports building connections and networking opportunities for working class theatre directors and theatre makers.

This could be hosting a networking event for the working class theatre directors and theatre makers in your city/town or nationally or paying for your time to have meetings with key people you want to connect with e.g. artistic directors or programmers at theatres or potential collaborators you want to work with.

It is flexible in how the bursary can be spent. This might be on fees for yourself or others, hire of space, resources like refreshments for meetings, Zoom accounts, travel, or accommodation costs etc. but you will need to provide a brief budget.

You can apply as an individual, a group/collective, or as a company.

Where possible, RTYDS can assist with building these connections through our existing networks.

WHAT’S AVAILABLE?

Five bursaries of £800. The bursary should be used between January - April 2027.

WHO IS IT FOR?

- Directors and theatre makers living and making work in Barrow in Furness, Blackburn and Darwen, Blackpool, Burnley, Copeland, Hyndburn, Knowsley, Pendle, Rochdale, Rossendale, Salford, St. Helens, Tameside, or Wigan.
- Mid-career directors and theatre makers.
- Those who are working class or from a low socio-economic background.
- You should be resident in one of the above DCMS Culture Priority Places in the North West of England at the point of application.

DEADLINE TO APPLY

You can express an interest by **Monday 30th November at 9am**.

Please see below for more information about if this opportunity is for you.

HOW TO APPLY

To apply for a Networking Bursary, click the link below to complete the online application form:

APPLY HERE

You can also apply via video or audio (approximately three minutes in length). Click on the link above and follow the form for instructions.

The form begins with eligibility questions, so please make sure you read the **'How do I know it's for me?'** section below carefully.

If you need an accessible version of the application form and the equal opportunities monitoring form, please contact RTYDS Programme Producer Manli Siu on manlisiu@rtyds.co.uk.

TIMELINE

Deadline: Monday 30th November at 9am

Decisions: Week commencing Monday 7 December

Meetings with successful applicants: Week commencing Monday 14 December

Bursaries take place: between January to April 2027

Next steps:

Once we have received and read the applications we may get in touch if we need a little more information.

We will be in touch with everyone who has applied with the outcome of their application by Friday 11 December 2026.

At the end of the time your bursary covers, we'd like to hear about what you did and what you learnt or developed. This isn't a measure of 'success', it's so that we can feed your

exploration or activity into our thinking and further plans. You can present this in any way you choose. This could be a blog for us to put on our website, an audio report, short email with bullet points, a diagram, etc. We will also share a 30-second survey.

MORE INFORMATION

FINANCIAL ACCESSIBILITY

£800 dropping into your bank account might not be the most financially accessible way for you to receive the money, and we can be really flexible with how we distribute the money so please don't let this be a barrier to applying.

If you have any questions, please email RTYDS Programme Producer Manli Siu on rtyds@rtyds.co.uk.

HOW DO I KNOW IT'S FOR ME?

You do not need to meet all of these criteria. They are intended as indicators to help you reflect on your experience and stage of development as a theatre director or theatre maker.

This opportunity is for:

Mid-career directors and theatre makers who are working class or from a low socio-economic background who live and make work in a DCMS Culture Priority Place.

We recognise the complexity around identification of class, economic and social background. We offer this as a starting point to thinking about whether this is an opportunity for you:

- You identify as working class or from a low socio-economic background, and work professionally in theatre.
- You claim Universal Credit, Jobseekers Allowance, Housing Benefit, Employment Allowance and other government funds.
- You might identify with coming from a low socioeconomic background or having lived experience of long-term poverty or long-term benefits.
- Have an annual family household income of less than £33,000 or less than £40,000 with mitigating circumstances (caregivers, care leavers, are over 18 and receiving Disability Living Allowance, Jobseekers Allowance or a Carers Allowance).
- You may have lived experience of the care system or the criminal justice system.
- You may have stopped formal education before further and higher education, or you may have been the first in your family to go to university.
- You are a migrant or refugee who experiences economic marginalisation both in your home country and England.
- You should be resident in England at the point of application.

HOW DO I KNOW IT'S NOT FOR ME?

- You identify as lower middle class, middle class, or upper class.

- You have family already working in the arts.
- You went to private school not on a bursary.
- Have an annual family household income of more than £33,000 or more than £40,000 with mitigating circumstances (caregivers, care leavers, are over 18 and receiving Disability Living Allowance, Jobseekers Allowance or a Carers Allowance).
- You live and work outside of England at point of application.

DEFINITIONS - WHAT DO WE MEAN BY MID-CAREER / THEATRE MAKER?

MID-CAREER

We also know that there are no hard and fast rules about how to determine where you are at in your development as an artist.

By mid-career we mean experienced artists who are confident in their practice and their artistic voice and have developed a body of work and defining style over a period of a number of years. They know the kind of work they want to make and why it matters.

When considering whether you identify as mid-career, some of the following may apply to you:

- You have worked professionally as a theatre director or theatre maker for around 10 years or more.
- You have originated and led the creation of work, rather than working solely as a performer.
- If you attended college or university, you are no longer a recent graduate and completed your studies more than five years ago (unless you returned to education later in life after already establishing a professional career).
- Directing/theatre making is your profession and primary creative practice, even if you have undertaken other work alongside it.
- You have created and realised several theatre projects (typically four or five or more) and have had opportunities to develop your craft, artistic voice, and approach to making work.
- These productions may have included short runs, participation projects, community-based work, or other settings that have contributed meaningfully to your development as an artist.

You do not need to meet all of these criteria. They are intended as indicators to help you reflect on your experience and stage of development as a theatre director or theatre maker.

THEATRE MAKERS

RTYDS specifically supports directors and theatre makers. We define theatre makers as artists who originate and realise theatrical work, shaping a project from its initial conception through to performance. The term also encompasses multidisciplinary artists whose practice is not defined by fixed roles such as director, writer, or designer.

WHAT ARE THE DCMS CULTURE PRIORITY PLACES?

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has identified towns and cities across the country where there is limited access to arts and culture. We want to provide opportunities for artists based in these places to enhance opportunity and networks.

We are focused on deepening our connection with the DCMS Culture Priority Places in the North West of England, which are:

- Barrow in Furness
- Blackburn and Darwen
- Blackpool
- Burnley
- Copeland
- Hyndburn
- Knowsley
- Pendle
- Rochdale
- Rossendale
- Salford
- St. Helens
- Tameside
- Wigan

You can find out more at www.gov.uk/government/publications/dcms-place-targeting/culture-priority-places