

## Immediate Theatre

### Consultant Brief – Phase 1: Clarifying Future Direction and Sustainability

#### 1. About Immediate Theatre

Immediate Theatre is a Hackney-based arts organisation founded in 1996, currently approaching its 30th anniversary. The organisation was established to use theatre and creative practice as a tool for social change, with a strong commitment to community-rooted, values-led work.

**Our Vision:** To involve communities in creative projects that inspire wellbeing, break down barriers and engage people in the process of personal and social change.

#### Our Objectives:

- To provide inspiring participatory arts programmes enabling people to reach their potential and prevent exclusion and social isolation
- To create performances which explore social issues, engage people in the process of change and influence decision making
- To improve health and wellbeing and increase life skills and employability through engagement in the arts.

While Immediate Theatre's mission and core values have remained broadly consistent over three decades, the organisation now finds itself at a significant moment of transition – shaped by funding instability, leadership succession planning, and changing external contexts.

Immediate Theatre currently delivers work across three broad strands:

- **People and Community** – Estate Based Youth Theatres, Creative Connections, working with the over 60's, providing engagement, participation and community-rooted practice
- **Training** – skills development, organisational training and capacity building for others
- **Creative Delivery** – theatre-based interventions with schools, organisations and communities

Arts and creativity run as a *golden thread* through all activity, rather than as a separate programme. All activities are FREE to participants.

Alongside this structure, the organisation articulates its work through three strategic pillars:

- Sharing Stories
- Shaping Futures
- Healthy Communities

Much of Immediate Theatre's impact is connected to health, wellbeing, and positive social outcomes, though this is not currently articulated consistently across funding and communications.

## 2. Current Context and Challenges

Immediate Theatre is operating in an increasingly challenging funding environment and is facing **significant short-term financial pressure**.

Key contextual factors include:

- A projected **26/27 budget of just under £500,000**, currently less than 50% confirmed.
- Significant **building-related overheads** (£44,844 per year), prompting exploration of increased earned income through hire and use of space.
- Regular but low-level local authority funding for youth work, supplemented by trusts and National Lottery funding (Reaching Communities grant currently under renewal)
- Increasing difficulty securing funding for adult focussed strands of work due to **shifting funder priorities**, including reduced support for Pathways to Employment and Creative Connections (older people)
- A growing emphasis by local authorities on grassroots and Black-led organisations, requiring careful consideration of positioning, partnerships, and leadership.
- A **core staff structure built around project funding**, now requiring review and likely restructuring, with a desire to avoid purely reactive decisions.

There are also important organisational and leadership considerations:

- The Artistic Director/Founder has indicated an intention to retire in 2032 and is seeking to transition Trustees into a stronger leadership role.
- Senior management capacity is stretched, with limited time for strategic thinking.
- There is an acknowledged **imbalance between participant demographics and senior leadership**, raising questions about leadership representation, organisational culture, and future options.

## 3. Purpose of the Consultancy

Immediate Theatre wishes to appoint a consultant to support Trustees and senior leadership in **clarifying future direction and sustainability**, without commissioning a full organisational strategy at this stage.

The consultancy is intended to:

- Support strategic clarity rooted in Immediate Theatre's values and core practice
- Avoid reactive growth driven solely by funding opportunities
- Provide Trustees with a robust, evidence-informed basis for decision-making, this may include (but is not limited to) sector insight, comparable organisation models, funding landscape perspectives, and insights drawn from engagement with Trustees and staff.

The consultancy will take a **phased approach**, with clear review points. This brief relates **only to Phase 1**.

## 4. Scope of Phase 1 Work

The consultant will be asked to work closely with Trustees and senior management to explore and clarify the following areas.

#### 4.1 Core Purpose and Offer

- Clarify Immediate Theatre's **core programmes and methodologies** that should be protected over the next 2–3 years.
- Explore the balance between long-established youth theatre provision and the organisation's original project-based, methodology-led roots.
- Test whether the organisation's current spread across age groups and programme types supports clarity of identity and impact.

#### 4.2 Geography, Identity and Scale

- Explore the tension between Immediate Theatre's strong **local identity in Hackney** and aspirations to work beyond this geography.
- Consider whether the organisation's grassroots approach is transferable, and under what conditions (e.g. partnerships, time, resourcing).
- Support thinking about whether Hackney remains the right long-term base for Immediate Theatre.

#### 4.3 Sustainability and Revenue

- Provide a high-level analysis of the **current funding landscape** relevant to Immediate Theatre's areas of work.
- Identify realistic opportunities for **diversification**, including:
  - Earned income
  - Training and consultancy offers
  - Creative methodologies packaged for public sector, education, or organisational use
- Consider the risks and opportunities of different revenue mixes in the context of Immediate Theatre's values and capacity.

#### 4.4 Health and Wellbeing Positioning

- Explore how health, wellbeing and prevention outcomes can be more explicitly and credibly articulated within Immediate Theatre's work.
- Test the viability and risks of a stronger focus on health framing, including links to social prescribing, NHS priorities, and prevention agendas.

#### 4.5 Organisational Implications

- Consider implications for **staffing, skills, leadership capacity, and structure**, recognising current financial pressures.
- Support Trustees to understand what choices and trade-offs different future directions may imply.

### 5. Approach

The consultant is expected to act as a **critical friend**, balancing analysis, sector insight and facilitation rather than producing a prescriptive strategy. Reporting to a committee comprising the Artistic Director, Jo Carter, Chair of Trustees Shekeila Scarlett and Trustee Stephen Moss.

The work should include:

- Structured conversations with the Artistic Director and senior managers
- Engagement with Trustees (potentially including a facilitated away-day or workshop)
- Light-touch engagement with staff where appropriate

The consultant must demonstrate understanding of:

- Small-to-medium arts organisations
- Community-rooted practice
- Funding and commissioning contexts
- The realities of limited capacity and financial pressure

And a willingness to objectively present any hard choices required to sustain a viable, thriving organisation

## **6. Outputs (Phase 1)**

Phase 1 is expected to deliver:

A clear, practical briefing paper that sets out:

- Key insights and findings
- A small number of clear strategic choices or options for the organisation over the next 2–3 years, articulated in a way that highlights:
  - What would be prioritised, protected, reduced or paused
  - How each option aligns with Immediate Theatre’s values, mission and core practice
- For each option:
  - Benefits and opportunities
  - Risks, trade-offs and dependencies (including financial, capacity and leadership implications)
- Implications for sustainability, including funding mix, revenue potential and organisational capacity
- Clear recommendations for next steps, including:
  - Immediate actions Trustees may wish to take
  - Whether a further phase of work is recommended, and if so, the focus and purpose of that phase

### **Decision Support**

The outputs should be presented in a way that:

- Clearly distinguishes analysis, options and recommendations
- Makes explicit the choices Trustees are being asked to consider, and enables Trustees to test and discuss trade-offs

### **Exclusions**

- Phase 1 will not produce a full organisational strategy, business plan or detailed implementation roadmap
- Any future strategy or implementation work would be considered separately, subject to Trustee approval

## 7. Timescale and Budget

- Phase 1 is expected to begin as soon as possible.
- Budget available: **£3,000 - £4,000** (from reserves), inclusive of fees and expenses.
- There may be potential for additional phases of work subject to funding and Trustee approval.

## 8. What We Are Looking For

We are seeking a consultant (individual or small team) who can demonstrate:

- Relevant experience in arts, cultural or community organisations
- Understanding of values-led practice and organisational sustainability
- A thoughtful, collaborative and proportionate approach
- Ability to work confidently with both staff teams and Trustees

## Promotional Summary

Immediate Theatre invites expressions of interest from suitably experienced consultants to support Trustees and senior leadership in a Phase 1 consultancy focused on clarifying the organisation's future direction and sustainability. As Immediate Theatre approaches its 30th anniversary, this commission will help identify strategic priorities, test options for long-term resilience, and provide a clear basis for future decision-making. We are seeking an individual or small team with demonstrable experience in arts, cultural or community organisations, alongside strong strategic insight, facilitation skills, and an understanding of values-led practice. The available budget for Phase 1 is £3,000–£4,000 inclusive of fees and expenses. Interested consultants are invited to submit a brief proposal to [jo@immediate-theatre.com](mailto:jo@immediate-theatre.com) by Friday 12th June at 12 noon. Interviews are expected to take place in the week commencing 22nd June.

## 9. How to apply.

Please send a brief proposal to the Artistic Director – [jo@immediate-theatre.com](mailto:jo@immediate-theatre.com)

By Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June at 12.00 Noon

Interviews will be held in the week commencing June 22<sup>nd</sup>

Proposals should include:

- A brief outline of approach and time commitment (e.g. number of days) and cost
- Relevant experience
- Proposed methodology and project plan for Phase 1
- References