**Exploring potential of Skills Bootcamps for the Theatre Sector**

The Department for Education is looking to expand the delivery of 'Skills Bootcamps' (free short courses for people aged 19+) from 2024 and is asking the creative industries about their skills needs to determine where bootcamps will be most effective. They have the following questions for us which I have begun to answer.

**Please add any further information you have.**

**Current sector skills priorities**

1. **What are your priorities for skill/occupation training in your sector, and how have these been determined?**

In 2020 the Policy Evidence Centre reported that 42% of creative industries employers were struggling to recruit people with the required skills.[[1]](#footnote-2) COVID-19 and the economic impact of subsequent lockdowns resulted in the loss of thousands of staff across the sector. In 2019, 315,000 people worked in music, performing and visual arts. In 2021, this figure was 296,000, a 6% drop in the workforce, including a decrease of 17,000 (-7.7%) in self-employed roles. Many have chosen not to return since the end of the pandemic, with evidence from the music, performing and visual arts sectors suggesting that the self-employed have been disproportionately affected. More than ever, theatres are now competing for talent against other entertainment, hospitality and retail industries.

The problem is particularly acute for highly skilled back-of-house roles where theatres are competing against a growing Film and High-End TV (FHETV) production market in the UK. Screenskills research shows that, since 2018, direct employment in FHETV has grown by 48%, with forecast growth of another 35% between 2022 and 2025[[2]](#footnote-3). For other essential roles including marketing, finance and HR, our members find professional services outbidding, particularly in the capital.

The is great commercial potential of the theatre industry, which has the potential to provide creative and technical jobs for over 200,000 employees and freelancers across the UK. With experience and skills honed over decades, benefiting from the expertise passed down by previous generations, excellence has always been complemented by international colleagues who contribute fresh approaches which combine to make the British stage globally renowned.

This information has been gathered through conversations with SOLT/UKT members and research from the broader creative industries sector.

1. **What skills/occupations are in highest demand in your sector, what is the scale of this demand, and how is it measured?**

Our members cite shortages in technical and production teams, specifically those working in lighting, sound and music, rigging, automation, VR, costume, wigs, hair and make-up. This information has been gathered through informal consultations and surveys. As a result of skills shortages, young people in junior positions are being promoted to more senior roles more quickly than would ordinarily be the case.

1. **What do current training offers for these skills look like in structure and skill level? Are there any gaps in training offers meeting employer needs?**

The charity, [Stage One](https://stageone.uk.com/bridge-the-gap), which nurtures and trains emerging theatre producers, has supported theatre producers for over 40 years through educational programmes and investment schemes. In an average year they provide ten paid placements across the UK, support and advice for 150 new producers, £150,000 in bursaries for independent producers, 70 places on the inaugural Stage One Workshop.

Stage One’s [Bridge the Gap](https://stageone.uk.com/bridge-the-gap) programme aims to address the lack of diversity in commercial theatre production by providing support for 11 people each year from underrepresented groups including producers who are disabled, from the Global Ethnic Majority, identify as working class and or LGBTQIA+.

1. **Are there areas where the Skills Bootcamps model could offer an intervention leading to filled vacancies?**

Skills Bootcamps have the potential to help address skills gaps in the theatre sector. Existing bootcamps could be adapted to meet the needs of the theatre sector. For example, the Create Central’s bootcamp in Drama and Scripted TV funded by the West Midland Combined Authority and delivered by the University of Birmingham represents an exemplar of what might be achieved in the theatre sector.[[3]](#footnote-4)

1. **Current skills bootcamps delivery**

If your sector delivers Skills Bootcamps, which areas are going well and which are more challenging in terms of:

* 1. Demand
  2. Uptake
  3. Outcomes
  4. Provider/employer quality and capacity

1. **Emerging skills needs**

Are there any emerging skills priorities in your area/sector, and what data are you using to identify these?

Information needed.

1. **What training offers are available for these skills?**

Information needed.

**Examples of apprenticeship schemes run by our members**

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| **Royal Shakespeare Company**  The Royal Shakespeare Company recently released a new [film](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cr7rE3ofUIE) showcasing the diverse career pathways available as part of its UK-wide Apprenticeships scheme. The Company plans to extend its current programme of Apprenticeships from 11 to 28 by the Spring of 2024. The specific focus is on young people with under-represented protected characteristics and/or from lower socio-economic backgrounds.  Seven of their apprenticeship posts began at the start of 2023, with a further four apprentices set to join the organisation in April and the remainder in post by Spring 2024.  Working in partnership with a nationwide network of 12 Associate Regional Theatres across the UK alongside regional training providers Solihull College & University Centre and Stratford-upon-Avon College and Chichester College, the RSC’s national Apprenticeship Programme provides targeted apprenticeship opportunities across all areas of its work  The RSC currently offers apprenticeships in the Operations, Automation, Learning and National Partnerships and Front of House teams. Previous RSC apprenticeships have included placements in Customer Services, Venue Management, Scenic Carpentry, Scenic Engineering, Catering, Costume, Prop making and Maintenance Engineering.  Apprenticeships at the Royal Shakespeare Company are intended for people who want to pursue a career in theatre, taking a work-based path and offering the opportunity to gain Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE grade A\*-C/9-4) and/or Level 3 qualifications (equivalent to an A Level). On average, apprentices spend around 80% of their time at the RSC and 20% with their training provider.  Apprentices can train and earn a salary, whilst studying towards a professional qualification, with all coursework time included in their contracted hours. |

Add information from other members

1. **Could the Skills Bootcamps model support delivery in any of these areas?**

Civil servants at DCMS and DfE want to know whether Skills Bootcamp courses could help to address skills shortages in the sector. These courses last up to 16 weeks and employers would need to guarantee a job interview at the end of the course. This entry route will not be suitable for all roles however feedback from members on which skills shortages could be addressed through this route would be helpful.

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| **Skill** | **Would a 16-week course be suitable?** | **Can the employer guarantee a job interview at the end of the course?** |
| Café Bar Staff |  |  |
| Front of House Assistant |  |  |
| Bartender |  |  |
| Finance Assistant |  |  |
| Wigs, Hair & Makeup |  |  |
| Costume |  |  |
| Stage Technician |  |  |
| Production Assistant |  |  |
| Lighting Technician |  |  |
| Sound Technician |  |  |
| Automation Assistant |  |  |
| Please specify other roles |  |  |

1. Spilsbury and Bakshi, 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://www.screenskills.com/media/5559/2022-06-23-labour-market-shortages-and-training-investment-needs-research.pdf> p. 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/short-courses/cal/drama-and-scripted-tv-boot-camp.aspx#CourseOutcomeTab [↑](#footnote-ref-4)