

**UK
THEATRE**

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UK Theatre Business Plan 2025

1 January 2025

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Please note - This is a UK Theatre Business Plan, and we work in partnership with Society of London Theatre, our sister organisation. We will use the word 'organisations' throughout this document to represent both SOLT & UK Theatre.

Introduction

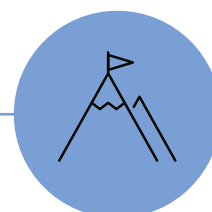
This 2025 business plan takes us into year two of our five-year strategic plan for SOLT & UK Theatre. The vision and mission, which underpin our headline goals, remain the same. The objectives to deliver these goals have been updated for 2025 to ensure they are robust and relevant to the needs of our members.



Our Vision

The world we
want to see

A dynamic, sustainable,
world-class theatre sector



Our Mission

The role we will play in
achieving this

To champion theatre and
support our members to thrive

Headline goals



Audience

Increasing engagement
with theatre



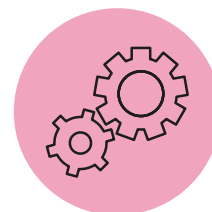
Advocacy

Creating the external conditions
for theatre to thrive



Membership

Developing & supporting a growing,
engaged & united membership



Finance & Operations

Building a strong,
sustainable organisation

Headline objectives 2025

Audience

Increasing engagement with theatre

1. Raise the profile of theatre and the work of our members through **headline events and key campaigns**.
2. Ensure that our audiences feel informed and engaged by delivering **relevant and compelling marketing** to grow and diversify audiences.
3. Grow the income we need to deliver our goals, primarily through **audience development, commercial partnerships and technical solutions**.

Advocacy

Creating the external conditions for theatre to thrive

4. Increase influence by **identifying relationships and opportunities** with Government and other decision makers that **raise our visibility and achieve positive impact** for the theatre ecosystem.
5. Build credibility and trust by **commissioning, developing and presenting evidence-based data and information**.
6. Position the sector as a **force for good** – an economic powerhouse that delivers transformative social good within communities up and down the country.

Membership

Developing and supporting a growing, engaged and united membership

7. Enhance member experience through **targeted engagement and dedicated support**, ensuring members get excellent value. This will help to increase member retention and recruitment.
8. Deliver a comprehensive **Member Programme of events, resources and benefits** to support the diverse needs of members.
9. Provide high-quality **member services and expert advice**, including horizon scanning on their behalf and constructive industrial relations with all key unions.

Finance & Operations

Building a strong, sustainable organisation

10. Equip the organisation for success by **upgrading our systems, tools, and skills** in ways that help us plan and deliver more efficiently.
11. Ensure effective **use of funds and safeguarding assets**, by streamlining how we generate, use and manage our funds.
12. Enable the business to function effectively in a digital world by **implementing technologies that help us transform** how we do things.

Presidents' vision

Jon Gilchrist & Stephanie Sirr MBE

2025 is our final year as Joint Presidents of UK Theatre, having served a combined 22 years on the board. This has been period of extraordinary change including Brexit, a pandemic, a cost-of-living crisis, a change of government, and 13 Culture Secretaries. But regardless of the turbulent climate, we have remained inspired by the ingenuity and resilience of colleagues across the UK who ensure that theatre continues to thrive.

Another big change was the appointment of new leadership, and we have been proud to work alongside Co-CEOs Claire Walker and Hannah Essex to reshape UK Theatre. Together we have made a concerted effort to speak to colleagues across the UK, to hear about the opportunities and the challenges we face today. Our vision has been to better reflect all corners of our membership from across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales: producers and venues, not-for-profit and commercial.

We continue to make the case for theatre: as a source of nationwide economic growth and as a vital resource for all our communities. Despite the new government identifying a challenging financial landscape, the case is being made at the highest possible level for cultural investment, arts education, and infrastructure renewal.

Our Employment Relations team continue to represent and deliver one of the cornerstones of our purpose as a membership organisation. In 2025, we know it's critical to ensure that the impacts of changes to the NMW and National Insurance are acknowledged. The team are continuing to work in collaboration with Equity on the digs project, including meeting with venues and producers to develop best practice guidance for venues and touring companies.

The annual Theatre Conference took place at the Southbank Centre for the first time, welcoming record numbers with over 600 delegates from across the four nations (an increase of over 170). An undoubted highlight was the launch of the Theatre Greenbook Second Edition, further underlining a sector-wide determination to respond to the climate crisis. There was an 85% satisfaction



Stephanie Sirr & Jon Gilchrist, UK Theatre Presidents

rating for delegates, with 96% satisfaction with the change of venue. As we prepare for the Conference in 2025, the team would welcome further feedback on continuing to improve this critical event.

This year's UK Theatre Awards were a wonderful celebration of all that is incredible in theatre and had winners from all four nations, showing the breadth of talent we have both on and off stage. The ceremony took on a new format with the new location of 8 Northumberland Avenue and received an incredibly positive response from guests. A highlight for us all was seeing Jenny Sealey OBE receive the Outstanding Contribution to British Theatre Award – an accolade no one could deserve more.

More than ever, this has been done in collaboration with the Society of London Theatre (SOLT), ensuring that we are speaking as one voice.

The biggest honour as Joint Presidents has been to work alongside our extraordinary colleagues on the UK Theatre Board. As individuals they champion all parts of our sector and all corners of the UK, but together they have helped to shape UK Theatre as it is today, to better reflect the current state of the industry and to be the champions it needs for the future. In May, we are proud that Kathy Bourne, Executive Director of Chichester Festival Theatre, will take over as President. We know that UK Theatre will continue to champion the sector and work to deliver for the brilliant membership.

Welcome: Co-Chief Executives

Claire Walker & Hannah Essex

Welcome to Year Two of our Five Year Strategy for SOLT & UK Theatre. We are enormously proud of what our team has achieved, with and on behalf of you, our members, and we are looking forward to another busy year championing theatre and supporting our members to thrive. A special welcome to all of you who have joined over the last 12 months. We hope that you are feeling the benefits of membership and building connections across the sector.



Claire Walker & Hannah Essex, Co-CEOs

2024 saw significant political changes which has created both challenges and opportunities for our sector.

Through a collective effort, a new permanent rate of Theatre Tax Relief was announced in March 2024 and confirmed in the new Government's budget in October, giving the sector greater certainty and enabling longer-term planning. However, new policies such as increases to National Insurance contributions and to the National Minimum Wage mean that cost pressures continue to increase, and as a sector we must explore further ways to secure the sustainability of theatre.

The new Government has outlined its support for the creative industries by identifying us as a key growth sector and through its commitment to ensuring children have access to cultural experiences. While these policies are still in early stages of development, they present an opportunity for us to ensure Government understand what an asset our theatre industry is to the UK as a whole.

In 2025 we will focus on harnessing opportunities provided by the industrial strategy and the Comprehensive Spending Review to make the case for policy changes that will support the future sustainability of our sector in the face the ongoing pressure on the cost of living. Additionally, we will continue to campaign for increased access to theatre with our Theatre for Every Child campaign.

We are acutely aware of the significant skills shortages members face in their 'off-stage' teams in London and throughout the UK. As proud partners of the Theatre Development Trust (TDT), the charity founded by SOLT, we support their renewed focus on funding initiatives focused on recruiting and developing the theatre workforce, including work delivered by SOLT & UK Theatre. We will

continue to work with Government on reforms to the apprenticeship system, the expansion of skills boot camps, and curriculum reform which will help to improve and expand the pipeline of talent coming into our sector.

Critical to addressing these skills shortages is a collective effort to further diversify talent both on and off stage, and in doing so ensure that our industry is one that reflects, supports and champions diversity and inclusion. In 2025, we will launch a CEO Task Force to review how both SOLT & UK Theatre as organisations, and our members, can make further efforts to create diverse and inclusive workplaces. We know that fantastic work is happening but there is more to do. By the autumn we hope to have set out a clear plan for how to improve diversity and inclusion as an employer, and to have put together a programme of work that will support our members in this space.

Alongside TDT, we are pleased to be continuing our support for Stage One, a charity that does fantastic work to support and develop up and coming producers. Many of their alumni have gone on to become SOLT & UK Theatre members over the years. Our community has become richer thanks to their contribution to our collective work.

This year SOLT & UK Theatre will be creating more opportunities for members to connect with our team and with each other, not least at the Olivier Awards in April, the Theatre Conference in June, and UK Theatre Awards in October. Our programme of training, forums, webinars and working groups designed by members for members, is being developed to ensure that you get the support and information that you need on the key themes impacting you. And, of course, we will continue our vital work with our union partners to ensure constructive dialogue with our workforce.

See it Live in 2025 is our brand-new audience development campaign which we hope will drive new audiences and income to our members and create funds to help SOLT & UK Theatre deliver our advocacy and membership support activity. Please do get involved.

Internally, we continue to modernise our internal systems and processes and ensure that we are sustainable and efficient organisations, able to make an impact for our members long into the future.

It remains a privilege to lead these two fantastic organisations, and to represent such a vibrant, creative and ambitious membership. Thank you to all of you that have got involved over the last year, whether attending events, sitting on a committee, responding to a survey, or hosting an event. We look forward to seeing more of you over the next year, and don't forget you can easily get in touch with the team via members@soltukt.co.uk.

Activities to deliver headline objectives

The following sections outline the activities planned to deliver against the headline objectives for the organisations.



Audience

Increasing engagement with theatre

In 2025 we will be building on the successes and learnings from 2024 in order to maximise our resources and the investments that we have already made. Crucially, we will ensure that our key events and campaigns reflect our members' needs and raise the profile of theatre.

We will continue to build and diversify our audiences. This will be delivered via our See it Live campaign, which in 2025 will run across all our activities, brands and partnerships with a simple call to action to go to the theatre.

Using our key events to generate income through targeted partnerships has proven effective and we will continue to build on this in 2025. We will identify potential new business opportunities to generate additional income to support the wider work of the organisations.

We will be rolling out a new communications strategy for members with a monthly roundup and weekly targeted emails, ensuring that members do not miss what is relevant to them. We will also create a digital training brochure that can easily be shared to make it easier to book our courses.

We will be investing in our commercial operations to ensure that they are as effective as possible. The TKTS booth in Leicester Square will be undergoing a full refurbishment to create a central theatre hub that celebrates our members' shows, offers enhanced customer service and creates a positive working environment for our staff.

We will continue to roll out our online redemption programme to make it as easy as possible for customers to redeem their tokens and spend money in members' theatres and on their shows.



Theatre Tokens Gift Card

Key activity will include:

1. Raise the profile of theatre and the work of our members through headline events and key campaigns

- Continue to identify new ways to exploit both the Oliviers and UK Theatre awards from a profile raising and commercial perspective.
- Review voting procedures and categories to ensure that the awards reflect the work of all our members and the diversity of the sector.
- Deliver a Theatre Conference for SOLT & UK Theatre members.
- Work with Westminster City Council to deliver West End LIVE and ensure it is a sustainable event for the future.
- Explore ways that members can raise the profile of their work through our existing events and activities.

2. Ensure that our audiences feel informed and engaged by delivering relevant and compelling marketing to grow and diversify audiences.

- Improve and develop our owned channels (specifically our SOLT & UK Theatre websites, email communications strategy, data collection plan and social strategy), and further develop earned and paid channels for the amplification of our membership and advocacy work.
- Focus on brand awareness to ensure consistency across our consumer facing brands
- Launch and roll out the See it Live In 2025 campaign to develop new and diverse audiences through partnerships and outreach and link our existing activity.
- Continue to champion accessibility and sustainability both in our work and the work of our members and promote this work to new audiences.
- Work with UK Theatre members to define marketing needs and in turn ensure they are engaged with opportunities available to them.



Shalisha James-Davis (collecting for Punch), UK Theatre Awards

3. Grow the income we need to deliver our goals, primarily through audience development, commercial partnerships and technical solutions.

- Invest in the digital infrastructure of our ticketing operation and secure support from Westminster City Council to improve the TKTS Booth in

Leicester Square, making it a theatre hub to promote the work of our members and make it more accessible for our customers.

- Roll out online redemption for Theatre Tokens through all member systems and explore new ticketing solutions and business opportunities to future proof our operations and add value for our members.
- Maximise our new retail partnerships to increase token sales and identify new operating partners to improve customer experience and efficiency.
- Maximise our role as a not-for-profit organisation to bring in commercial partners that align with our objectives and support the work of our members.
- Increase income for our customer-facing brands by maximising our events and partnerships and exploring further income generation through our own platforms (i.e.YouTube).





Advocacy

Creating the external conditions for theatre to thrive

The new Government has been elected on a manifesto which includes warm commitments to children's access to culture, and their mission-based approach to delivery provides welcome opportunities for cross-departmental working.

In 2025, we will be looking to capitalise on this new political environment by ensuring that we have the strength and breadth of relationships across government, and working in effective coalitions to influence on behalf of members, delivering on a compelling policy programme that creates the conditions for theatre to thrive.

We will be building on the success of 2024 by seeking to make impactful change on behalf of members across a range of policy areas including Make Work Pay (the Government's reform to employment law), sustainable investment in theatre buildings, education and skills, and public investment in the performing arts.

It is essential that our policy work – and indeed our negotiations with our union partners – is underpinned by robust evidence about the challenges and opportunities within the theatre ecosystem. We are therefore placing renewed emphasis on ensuring all of our members are contributing to our Evidence Centre. This will allow SOLT & UK Theatre to draw robust conclusions about the ecosystem which will support our advocacy work and enable us to publish a 'state of the nation' report about the theatre sector.

Key activity will include:

4. Increase influence by identifying relationships and opportunities with Government and other decision makers that raise our visibility and achieve positive impact for the theatre ecosystem.

- Engage in more effective coalition working and stakeholder engagement.
- Develop relationships across government, press, and stakeholders to take advantage of new opportunities and successfully influence on advocacy priorities.
- Engage effectively with London stakeholders, including Westminster and Camden local authorities, Holba, the GLA and London Mayor on behalf of SOLT & UK Theatre members.
- Make better use of our set piece events, such as the Olivier Awards, UK Theatre Awards and Theatre Conference to amplify our advocacy messages to the media and decision-makers.

5. **Build credibility and trust by commissioning, developing and presenting evidence-based data and information.**

- Continue to deliver on the Evidence Centre work plan to realise its vision as an effective advocacy tool and member benefit and move to as close to 100% of members signed up as possible.
- Provide effective evidence on the efficacy of new Theatre Tax Relief rates and support members with the application of TTR.
- Continue to develop and deliver a policy and research programme that helps to create the conditions for theatre to thrive, including:
 - Public investment in performing arts – thought leadership on what good public investment looks like.
 - TFEC – piloting interventions to address barriers to children accessing theatre and sharing this insight with government.
 - Investing in theatre buildings – developing mechanisms for investment and influencing government and other stakeholders.
 - Skills – articulate the skills gaps in the theatre sector and work with stakeholders to develop mechanisms to address them.
 - Employment issues - providing insight and data to support collective bargaining and continuing to influence government on employment issues, particularly regarding Make Work Pay.

N.B. this activity also supports the meeting of objectives 4 and 6

6. **Position the sector as a force for good – an economic powerhouse that delivers transformative social good within communities up and down the country.**

- Develop and implement a press strategy, ensuring our messaging is reaching key audiences and shaping opinion.
- Develop SOLT & UK Theatre’s thought leadership role, via policy development and successful engagement, around public investment in the performing arts.
- Publish a ‘state of the nation’ report that sets out the health of the theatre ecosystem and areas that require addressing if we are to achieve a dynamic, vibrant, and sustainable theatre sector.
- Continue to develop and embed an effective narrative for the theatre sector, expanding to include issues that span the performing arts.





Membership

Developing & supporting a growing, engaged & united membership

In 2025, we aim to cultivate a robust and responsive membership community that can effectively meet the evolving needs of our industry.

Maintaining positive industrial relations with the three main unions across SOLT & UK Theatre will remain a cornerstone of our strategy. We will also leverage data to guide our strategic direction for the upcoming negotiations in late 2025.

To foster deeper connections and support among our members, we will introduce “industry insight sessions” to encourage further networking and collaboration. Additionally, we will explore and implement new training opportunities focused on essential soft skills—such as communication, leadership, and adaptability—specifically tailored for those in executive and director roles.

Key activity will include:

7. Enhance member experience through targeted engagement and dedicated support ensuring members get excellent value. This will help to increase member retention and recruitment.

- Personalise the induction process for new members by offering to visit their theatre, venue and/or offices. Inductions will be tailored to each new member with resources and dedicated support to facilitate their seamless integration into SOLT or UK Theatre.
- Enhance active collaboration with member committees, including joint Membership Committee (MemCo), to provide support, guidance and in-depth scrutiny on all SOLT/UK Theatre membership issues.
- Gain insights and stay informed on industry priorities through member forums, networking, working groups, and board engagement.
- Schedule regular feedback sessions to capture experiences and insights, enabling us to identify specific areas for improvement in our services.
- Ensure all communications to members are targeted, relevant and considered essential reading.
- Actively recruit new members by launching targeted campaigns that showcase member incentives, such as exclusive networking events, discounted training rates, and access to invaluable industry specific resources and expertise

8. Deliver a comprehensive Member Programme of events, resources and benefits to support the diverse needs of members

- Launch a CEO sponsored taskforce to deliver an EDI strategy for our organisations and on behalf of our members.

- Expand our online resource hub of toolkits on best practices in the industry, including a new HR “A to Z”. Host monthly webinars linked to the hub, allowing members to engage directly and ask questions.
- Co-ordinate regional networking and topic-specific roundtables that allow members to connect over shared interests and challenges, promoting collaboration and networking opportunities
- Facilitate training and development opportunities focused on practical skills development to meet current industry demands and member needs in conjunction with the Programme Working Party
- Keep members informed about the latest industry practices and promote continuous workforce improvement by expanding our webinars and discussion forums. Topics based on member feedback to ensure relevance and engagement.

9. Provide high-quality member services and expert advice, including horizon scanning on their behalf and constructive industrial relations with all key unions.

- Ensure continued strong partnerships with unions by actively participating in negotiations around the terms and conditions of the collective agreements. Offer dedicated support and training to members in understanding and applying the agreements in their workplaces.
- Provide industry-leading professional services and tailored advice, focusing on areas such as compliance and HR to ensure members receive the highest level of expertise. Offer specialised paid consultancy services to include H&S auditing, training and Safeguarding.
- Support members in implementing sustainable working practices by providing resources and new training courses on sustainability initiatives. Organise forums and workshops to raise awareness about the latest industry commitments and regulations around sustainability.
- Review and update contract templates to ensure they meet current industry standards and continue engaging with members via forums and working groups to address specific challenges.



Theatre Conference 2024



Finance & Operations

Building a strong, sustainable organisation

Our ambition is for our organisations to be rooted in solid and sustainable finances, enabling opportunities to be realised for the benefit of members over the short and longer term. We will harness the opportunity from technology to be efficient and effective, and we will attract and retain a high-quality workforce with the right skills to deliver. A particular focus in 2025 will be on realising our equality, diversity and inclusion aspirations, and developing a plan to reduce our carbon footprint.

Key activity will include:

10. Equip the organisation for success by upgrading our systems, tools and skills in ways that help us plan and deliver more efficiently.

- Embed new finance and HR systems to enable use of data to inform business decision making.
- Build financial skills across the organisation to enable effective budget management, strengthened financial controls, and compelling business cases.
- Build a learning and development programme for our staff, including development of people management skills and realising our equality, diversity and inclusion ambitions.
- Make further improvements to Rose Street to ensure the building enables productive use by staff and other stakeholders, meets compliance standards, and is protected as a critical asset.
- Develop a plan to reduce our carbon footprint.

11. Ensure effective use of funds and safeguarding assets, by streamlining how we generate, use and manage our funds.

- Implement a multi-year planning process, to include rolling capital planning and clear funding strategy in support of long-term growth and financial sustainability.
- Introduce efficient and effective procurement, evidencing value for money purchasing.
- Review governance and corporate structures.

12. Enable the business to function effectively in a digital world by implementing technologies that help us transform how we do things.

- Implement a rolling improvement programme for hardware and software, with a specific focus on reducing cost and improving security.

- Drive value from our data through improved systems, data capture, and data management.
- Improve our digital maturity through upskilling our staff.



Theatre Conference 2024

How to get in touch

Members can get in contact with the team directly at members@soltukt.co.uk and enquiries will be directed to the relevant team member.

You can call us on **020 7557 6700**

You can also book an online meeting or visit us in person at:

**32 Rose Street
London
WC2E 9ET**

For more information on visiting our office, please see the dedicated page on our website: uktheatre.org/contact

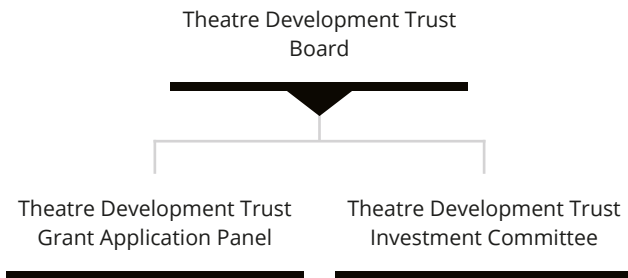
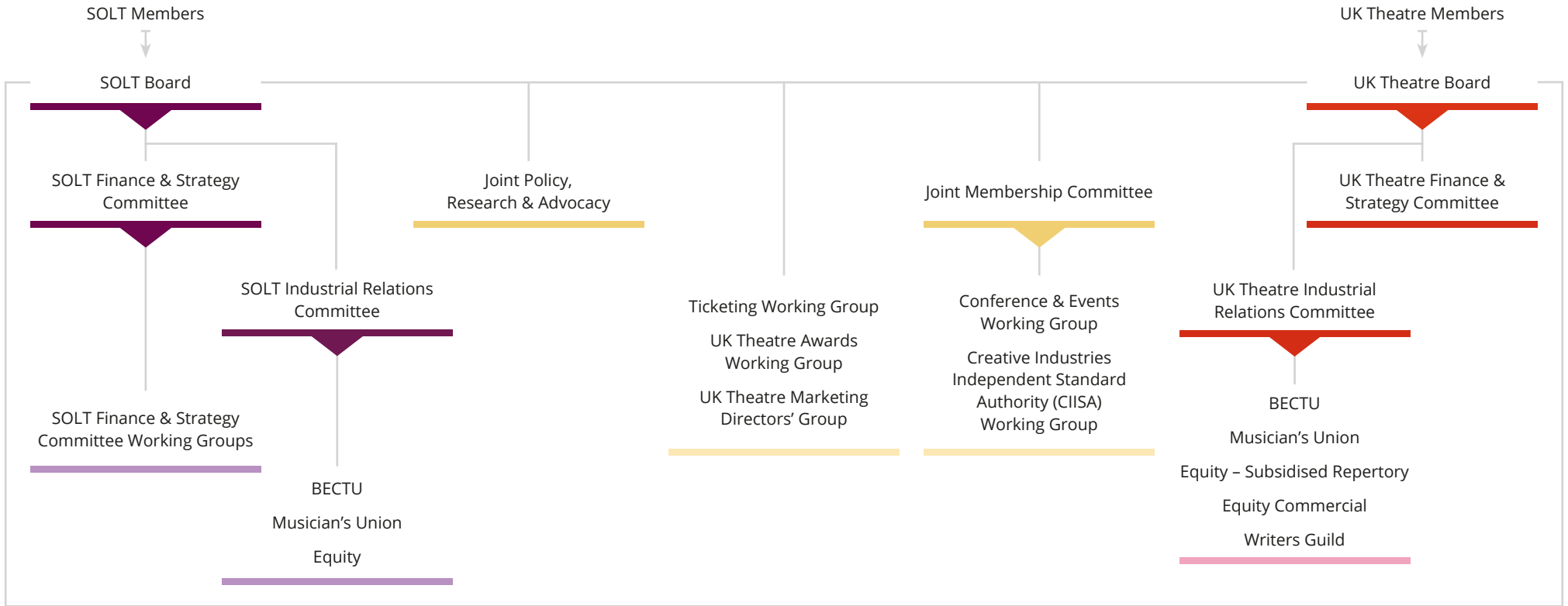
Committee structure

The Co-CEOs report to the President of UK Theatre and the UK Theatre Board, who meet at least quarterly (i.e. four times per year). The Board consist of members, some of whom are elected by the rest of the membership and others who are co-opted by the Board. Elected Board members can serve up to six years (split into three-year terms) and elections take place each year before our AGM. Co-opted Directors may serve for three years and are appointed after the AGM.

The organisation has a Finance & Strategy Committee (FSC) which reports into the Board, generally comprised of members of the Board. The FSC is responsible for considering financial and strategic matters in detail and making recommendations to the Boards for approval. There are two Joint Committees with SOLT, to support and advise on the Membership and Advocacy strategies. These joint committees are responsible for considering in detail matters raised within each area of work making recommendations to the Boards for approval where appropriate. There are also several sub-committees working on specific issues, which report into and make recommendations to the Joint Committees or FSC.

Finally, there is an Industrial Relations Committee, responsible for union negotiations and comprising experts in industrial relations matters drawn from UK Theatre members organisations. A number of negotiating committees responsible for negotiations with specific unions report into the Industrial Relations Committee.

Governance structure



Team structure

The organisation is made up of five teams under each director. The staff team delivers for both SOLT & UK Theatre.

A full staff list can be found on the [members' area of our website](#).

