

**UK  
THEATRE**

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# UK Theatre Business Plan 2026

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1 January 2026

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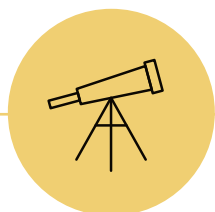
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Please note - This is a UK Theatre Business Plan, and we work in partnership with Society of London Theatre, our sister organisation. We will use the word 'organisations' throughout this document to represent both SOLT & UK Theatre.

# Introduction

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For 2026, the vision and mission, which underpin our headline goals, remain the same, however this year's objectives and the activities we will undertake to deliver these goals have been updated for 2026 to ensure they are relevant and reflect the needs of our members.

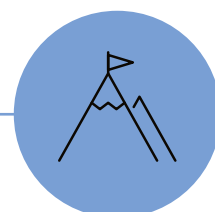


## Our Vision

The world we  
want to see

A dynamic, sustainable,  
world-class theatre sector

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## Our Mission

The role we will play in  
achieving this

To champion theatre and  
support our members to thrive

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## Headline goals



### Audience

Increasing engagement  
with theatre



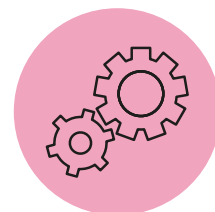
### Advocacy

Creating the external conditions  
for theatre to thrive



### Membership

Developing & supporting a growing,  
engaged & united membership



### Finance & Operations

Building a strong,  
sustainable organisation

## Our Values

### Purpose

#### We work with and for our members

We work **with** our members and the wider sector in true collaboration with a shared purpose to deliver our vision and mission. We work **for** our members with many other groups, including audiences, customers, partners and stakeholders.

We respect and champion the unique impact our members make to welcome, entertain, challenge, inspire and tell stories which change lives. We gather relevant knowledge from inside and outside our sector to continuously support, challenge and inspire our members.



### Contribution

#### We own our impact

We are empowered to take ownership of our work to make meaningful contributions and take pride in the impact we deliver. We work from a basis of trust and a culture which balances freedom to deliver our roles with professional accountability.

We use our initiative to understand our roles and the part we play in delivering our objectives. We are generous in sharing our unique skills, knowledge and talents with colleagues to help each other grow and develop.

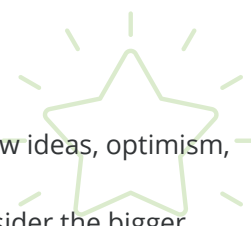


### Ambition

#### We believe in the art of the possible

We are ambitious for ourselves, our team and our members. We welcome new ideas, optimism, innovation, creativity and feel empowered to challenge the status quo.

We try to avoid getting bogged down in the day to day and remember to consider the bigger picture. We problem solve as we go. We understand that part of delivering, is taking time to plan, reflect and grow for next time.



### Collaboration

#### We are all in it together

We respect and appreciate our colleagues and work collaboratively towards shared success and overcoming challenges. We celebrate the wins, big or small, and take pride in the journey we're creating.

We create opportunities to celebrate and embrace the joy of working in theatre. We communicate openly, with fairness and honesty.



### Inclusion

#### We champion and celebrate diversity

Inclusivity is the common thread which runs through all our Values. We welcome diverse perspectives and understand everyone brings different skills and experiences from which we can all benefit.



## 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** that help **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.

# President's vision

## Kathy Bourne, UK Theatre President 2025-2028

It was an absolute privilege to take over as UK Theatre President at the AGM in June this year. I have thoroughly enjoyed spending more time with the UK Theatre Board, our Co-CEOs Claire Walker and Hannah Essex, the rest of the SOLT & UK Theatre team, and of course spending more time with UK Theatre members at a range of meetings and events. My huge thanks go to Stephanie Sirr and Jon Gilchrist who stepped down as Joint Presidents this year after a collective 22 years on the Board.

I am ambitious about what we can collectively achieve in the coming years and look forward to working as a team to support and champion our wonderful theatre sector.



Working alongside the Society of London Theatre, UK Theatre has ensured that the power and impact of all of your work is increasingly valued and understood by policy makers in Westminster and throughout the UK. The year ahead will bring significant policy change which will impact our members. SOLT & UK Theatre will ensure they are ready to act on behalf of our members to ensure that Government changes really work for our sector - including the opportunity to shape the implementation of the Employment Rights Bill, the future of capital funding and the outcome of the Arts Council Review.

With significant changes happening in local and regional Government, particularly across England, we will be working even harder to showcase and champion the magnificent work you all do for your audiences and your communities. We will also be creating even more opportunities for you and your teams to network, share and learn from each other as we navigate the evolving landscape together as a theatre community.

Working together, and speaking with one voice, has never been more important, and it is a priority of my Presidency to ensure even greater cohesion and collaboration across our wonderful theatre sector in the years ahead.

I very much look forward to seeing you at one of our events over the next 12 months, including the Theatre Conference in June and the UK Theatre Awards in the Autumn.



# Welcome: Co-Chief Executives

## Claire Walker & Hannah Essex

After another busy year, we're delighted to share our plans for 2026 with our UK Theatre members. Whether you are new to membership, or you are a long-serving member we hope that you will be excited about what we have in store and will take the opportunity to get involved and access our services and support throughout the year.

In 2025, the SOLT & UK Theatre team worked together to set our organisational values (see p.4). The first of these – Purpose; With and for our members – is a mantra that runs through all of our work. In the last three years UK Theatre has opened up even more opportunities for members to get involved, to share your insights and support us to shape our work. Thank you to all of you – whether you've responded to a survey, sat on a committee or hosted a visit, we're enormously grateful for your contribution. It really does make a difference. Thank you to our President, Kathy Bourne, Vice-President; Kris Bryce, and all of the UK Theatre Board for their support and contributions.

As we enter a busy period for negotiations with our trade union partners, we would also like to particularly thank Industrial Relations Committee Chair, Tom De Keyser, his IRC colleagues and everyone who has volunteered to join the negotiating committees. The UK Theatre team have prepared well for these negotiations and we will work hard to achieve appropriate and affordable settlements across all of our agreements. And of course, we will keep you posted throughout the year on how these negotiations are progressing.

We know the external operating environment remains tough for many of our members and there remains considerable political and economic uncertainty leaving many of you stretched and concerned for the future. Rising operating costs, ageing buildings, and continued pressure on public funding and sponsorship have created real strain. Touring continues to face fragile economics. And yet, despite this, you continue to bring joy, create magic and serve your communities in the most incredible way. We will continue to stand with you - to tackle these challenges, to advocate for policy change that creates opportunities for you, and to champion all of your brilliant work.



Claire Walker & Hannah Essex, Co-CEOs

We will also continue our focus on EDI – championing the difference our members are making and considering further ways to bring about diversity and inclusion within our organisations and our sector, and we will continue to evolve our series of networking, webinars and training to support our members.

We remain deeply ambitious for this organisation and for our members. In 2026, we will invest time in identifying what our brilliant sector will need from us in the years ahead and how we can evolve to meet those needs, and to strengthen our voice and influence as your membership body.

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](mailto: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

We are deeply ambitious about what we can achieve in 2026 building on the successes of 2025. We have used AI to streamline our repetitive tasks to free up resources and for 2026 we will be exploring how AI can enhance our marketing reach and solidify our position as a trusted voice for theatre. We will also be investing in our Theatre Token's technology which plays such a vital role in the financial stability and resourcing of the organisation.

The Olivier Awards will celebrate its 50th year, and we are working with a new headline partner and broadcaster to maximise every opportunity to raise the profile of theatre nationwide. Based on member feedback, we plan to run a version of the Love Your Local Theatre campaign alongside the Olivier Awards campaign to highlight the importance of UK Theatre members as an incubator of talent, using past Olivier winners to champion the impact their local theatre had on their careers. We will also be building on our Wish You Were Here campaign and exploring the opportunity for UK Theatre members to participate in Kids Week and our new pan-industry campaign in May.

We will also continue to review and evolve The UK Theatre Awards, ensuring they both celebrate and raise the profile of the wonderful work of our UK Theatre members, on and off stage.

Key activity will include:

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

- Review the UK Theatre Awards to ensure its purpose and value is understood.
- Continue to build on the Theatre Conference for SOLT & UK Theatre members.
- Continue to explore ways that members can raise the profile of their work through new sponsors and partnerships.

Theatre Tokens gift card



- Run a regional campaign to celebrate theatre as part of the Olivier Awards 50th anniversary celebrations

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

- Explore more campaigns to encourage theatregoing throughout the UK.
- Continue to work with UK Theatre members to define marketing needs and in turn ensure they are engaged with opportunities available to them.
- Undertake lead generation campaigns to grow nationwide audience data.

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

- Investing in technology to make improvements to our B2C platforms to continue to amplify our members work.
- Continue to grow Theatre Token sales through our own B2C channels, as well as maximising the opportunities with retail and third-party partners.
- Continue to roll out online redemption for Theatre Tokens through member systems and explore new ticketing solutions and invest in the Tokens website to future proof our operations and add value for our members.



Danielle Steele performs at the UK Theatre Awards 2025



## Advocacy

### Creating the external conditions for theatre to thrive

2025 saw significant change in Government and a huge number of opportunities to actively shape policy impacting our sector, guided by our member's needs.

In 2026, we will look to both maximise the strength of existing relationships across Government and build new relationships in response to political changes, so we can continue to effectively influence on behalf of members. We will also look to strengthen our cross-industry and performing arts collaboration, enabling us to amplify our sector's needs where they align with other industries.

We will continue to advocate for impactful change across policy areas that are critical to our members, including sustainable investment in theatre buildings, employment rights reform, business rates reform, education and investment in the performing arts.

A particular focus this year will be to seek opportunities to develop a pilot for our Theatre for Every Child campaign.

To support the effectiveness of our policy work and indeed our union negotiations, we will undertake a renewed push on building robust data sets. This includes encouraging all members to contribute to the evidence centre as well as engaging with our annual member survey to help us publish our second State of British Theatre report.

Key activity will include:

#### **4. Increase influence by identifying relationships and opportunities that help raise our visibility and achieve positive impact for the theatre ecosystem.**

- Build and maintain effective stakeholder relationships to create opportunities for coalition working on key issues for our sector.
- Develop relationships across government, political parties, regional Mayors, press, and other stakeholders to successfully influence on advocacy priorities.
- Engage effectively with stakeholders, including other sector bodies in the creative industries and beyond, to highlight the importance of theatres to their communities and the Creative Industries ecology, to local and national Governments and other decision-makers.
- Maximise our tentpole moments throughout the year, including 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.**

- Progress sign-ups to the Evidence Centre to realise its vision as an advocacy tool and member benefit, moving towards target of 100% members signed up.
- Continue to develop and deliver a policy 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 and co-ordinated response to Arts Council Review.
  - Theatre for Every Child – development of pilot to support children accessing theatre and ongoing advocacy for greater funding.
  - Investing in theatre buildings – advocating for changes to current funding opportunities to allow more theatres to access grants
  - Employment issues - providing insight and data to support collective bargaining and continuing to influence government on employment issues, particularly in relation to development of guidance emerging from the expected passing of the Employment Rights Bill.

## **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, seeking reactive opportunities and creating proactive moments to ensure our messaging is reaching key audiences.
- Continue to develop and embed an effective narrative for the theatre sector including actively building a case study bank that helps support our messaging
- Publish and publicise the second ‘State of British Theatre’ report that sets out the health of the theatre ecosystem and areas that require addressing to achieve a dynamic, vibrant, and sustainable theatre sector.
- Develop SOLT & UK Theatre’s thought leadership role, via policy development and successful engagement, around the opportunities and challenges across the sector.



## Membership

Developing & supporting a growing, engaged & united membership

Our ambition for 2026 is to continue to grow and future proof our membership community, providing tailored opportunities for engagement and supporting them in responding to our evolving industry.

Negotiating collective agreements across the four unions will be a key focus in 2026, ensuring that we deliver renewed agreements that meet the needs of our members and support them in operating effectively.

In addition to our flagship Theatre Conference which will return to the Southbank Centre in June, we will continue to focus on increasing the range of engagement opportunities to foster connections - including strategic leadership roundtables – as well as developing our resources and services to ensure they respond to member needs.

We are proud to be a founding partner of the Theatre Green Book and will continue to work in partnership with them to champion sustainable theatre practises and provide support to members.

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.**

- Communicate the full member offer to showcase the range of benefits and incentives including networking events, discounted training rates, and access to industry specific resources and expertise.
- Utilise dedicated member committees, to provide challenge and support on member issues and guide the overall membership review process.
- Gain insights on industry priorities through strategic leadership roundtables, member forums and working groups and board engagement.
- Build in regular feedback sessions to capture member experiences and insights to help identify specific areas for improvement in our services.
- Complete implementation of new CRM and use it to enhance our relationships with members, including through more targeted communications.





- 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.**

- Promote collaboration by developing and implementing an engagement plan that creates opportunities for connection and enables discussion on shared interests and challenges across the full range of our membership community.
- Review and develop our online resource hub – responding to relevant new legislation and exploring new ways to support members with their people challenges including piloting new tools
- Continue to evolve our Programme to ensure the offer is fit for purpose, leverages collaboration with other industry resources and focuses on member needs.
- Build a responsive and topical series of webinars and discussion forums, responding to industry developments.

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

- Lead members in the negotiations of the collective agreement ensuring a positive outcome for our members. Negotiations taking place in 2026 are:
  - UKT BECTU
  - UKT Equity (commercial)
  - UKT Equity (subsidised)
  - UKT MU
  - UKT WGGB
  - Ongoing: SOLT / UKT Designers
  - Expecting: SOLT / UKT Opera and Ballet claim in 2026
- Offer dedicated support to members in understanding and applying the collective agreements in their workplaces.
- Provide industry leading professional services and tailored advice, focusing on compliance, people and risk, signposting to external partners where more specialist knowledge is required to ensure members receive the highest level of expertise.
- Grow our specialised paid consultancy services to include H&S auditing, training and Safeguarding.



- Continue our support and engagement with the Theatre Green Book to ensure members are aware of sustainability best practice for our sector.
- Review and modernise contract templates to ensure they meet current industry standards. Continue engaging with members via forums and working groups to surface specific challenges.



Theatre Conference 2025



## **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 2026 will be making further progress in realising our equality, diversity and inclusion aspirations, and improving our operational technology alongside digital development in our customer facing business areas.

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.**

- Drive value from our finance and HR systems to enable use of data to inform business decision making.
- Develop equality, diversity and inclusion policy and practice in respect of our workforce, specifically including how we recruit talent.
- 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.
- Optimise value from operational technology with effective support from third party partners.

#### **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.
- Actively manage cash and investments to maintain strong liquidity, minimise risk and generate secure financial returns.
- Introduce efficient and effective procurement, evidencing value for money purchasing.
- Review how we reward our staff to ensure our pay policy and benefits package enables us to attract and retain talent.

## 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 2025

# How to get in touch

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Members can get in contact with the team directly at [members@soltukt.co.uk](mailto: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](http://uktheatre.org/contact)

## Committee structure

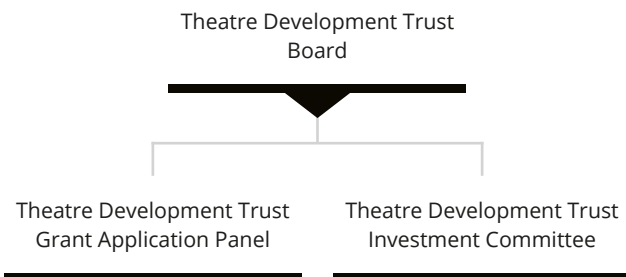
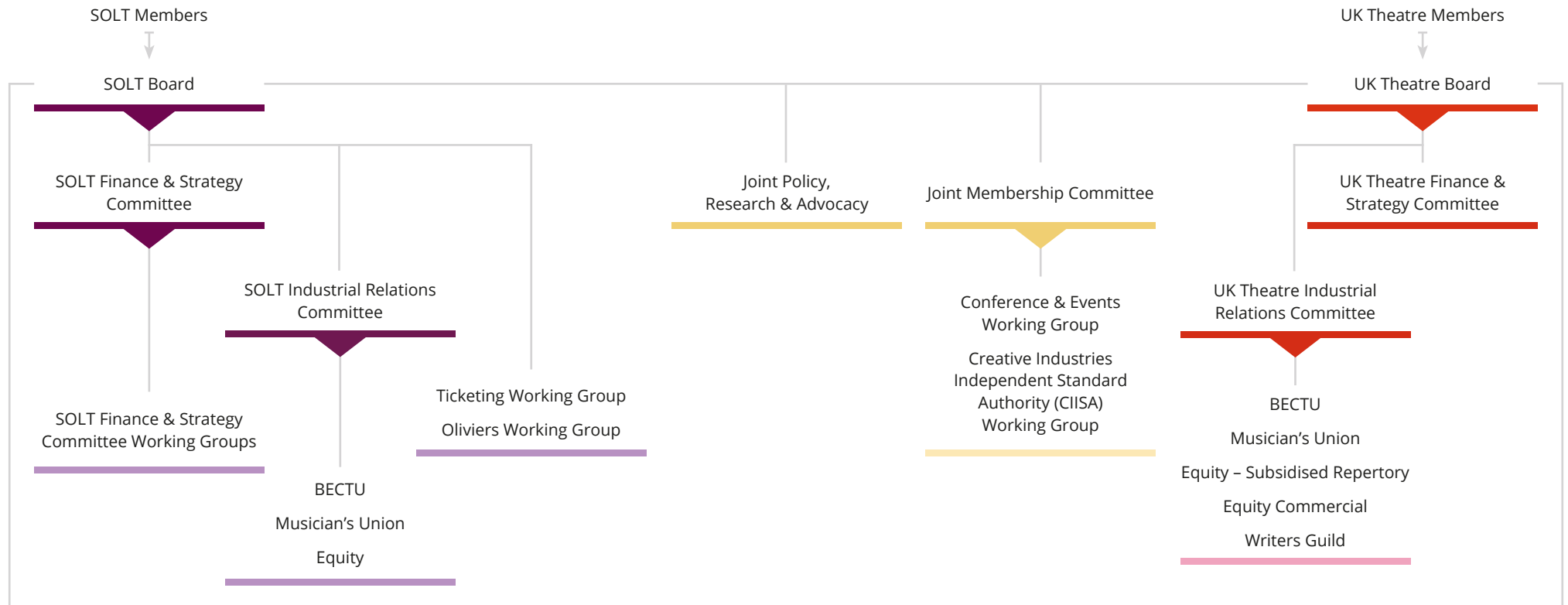
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The Co-CEOs report to the President of UK Theatre and the UK Theatre Board, who meet at least quarterly (i.e. four times per year). The Board consist of members, some of whom are elected by the rest of the membership and others who are co-opted by 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 SOLT & 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](#).

