

Theatre Allies

General Procedures

The initial two-fold goal of the **Theatre Allies** program is for AACT, in collaboration with member theatres, to: 1) assist in strengthening community theatres, 2) encourage and foster relationships between theatres (ideally within the same community or geographical area). **Theatre Allies** is intended to be a grass-roots (local/regional) level program, encouraged and recognized by the national association. As such, AACT does not arbitrarily pair sponsored theatres with sponsoring theatres. Rather, the intention is for an established theatre interested in serving as a sponsoring organization to reach out to another theatre in their community or region that would benefit from an ally.

As it is a program of the national association, all **Theatre Allies** participants must be current members of AACT. It is assumed that if a theatre needing the benefit of an Ally relationship is not currently a member, the “sponsoring” theatre may, in all likelihood, need to assist with the membership fee for the non-member. However, it is realized that one of the challenges the sponsored theatre may be facing is currently trying to maintain too high of a budget (“trying to run before they walk”). A sponsoring theatre should not be required to pay a new membership fee based upon what may be the non-realistic budget of a sponsored theatre. Therefore, **the membership fee for all first-time member sponsored Theatre Allies will be at the lowest organizational rate (\$80 for 2018-2019) for the first year regardless of budget.** Contact Member Engagement Director Geoff Leonard-Robinson to redeem this offer.

Below are the initial steps envisioned for establishing a **Theatre Allies** relationship:

1. Identify a theatre in your community or region that you believe would benefit from your theatre’s experience and knowledge, as well as the resources and discounts provided through AACT membership. Candidate theatres may be newly-formed, struggling due to recent events within their theatre or community, or a previously strong organization suffering from decline. (Note: It is possible that you may not want to “extend the hand of friendship” to a local organization that has attempted to “steal” advertisers, sponsors, actors, technicians, volunteers, etc., from your theatre. That decision would be based upon how magnanimous your theatre chooses to be.)
2. Reach out to the selected theatre, possibly by phone initially, to arrange a meeting. The meeting could be a personal visit to their theatre (if they have a resident space), an invitation to lunch, etc. The initial contact could include “local common knowledge” of their situation and the indication that your theatre would like to offer assistance and that the purpose of your visit would be to discuss possibilities. (e.g., “I understand that you’ve been doing some great work but may also have been having some serious challenges. We’d like to see how we might be of assistance in supporting your group and would like to chat about some options.”)
3. During the meeting, after some pleasantries and potential openness about challenges that your theatre has faced in the past, hopefully the selected theatre representative will share information as well (both successes and challenges).
4. When the time is right, introduce them to AACT’s **Theatre Allies** initiative and your theatre’s interest in participating. Briefly touch on the aspects/possibilities of the program and see if it’s something in which they’d be interested.

5. If they express interest and you still believe the two organizations would be a good match, you can move forward to express your theatre's interest in forming a **Theatre Allies** relationship with their theatre. ("Initially, we would sponsor a year's membership for you with AACT. Immediately, that will open up the opportunity for your theatre to access a lot of resources and information, as well as discounts on everything from royalties to paint.")
6. "In terms of the alliance between us, in what ways do you think we could assist you the most?"
7. Sample Alliance Features:
 - a. Regular meetings (once a week, once a month—whatever works for the sponsor)
--meetings can be in person, over the phone, some email—what works best
 - b. Discussions regarding history or current challenges that are perceived to stand between the theatre's current situation and where they dream of being
 - c. Recommendations on strategies, artistic choices, staffing, Board of Directors, volunteers, administration, etc.
 - d. Possibility of some shared resources (e.g., equipment, tools, set pieces, costumes, etc.)—limited to whatever is reasonable and possible for sponsoring theatre
 - e. Joint ventures (e.g., attendance at Board of Directors' meeting, auditions, rehearsal, special event co-presentation, joint production, etc.)—options are limitless
8. If both theatres agree to an Alliance (either at the initial meeting, or perhaps after both Boards of Directors have "endorsed" idea), execute a **Theatre Allies** agreement to be recorded at AACT office along with the nature of the Alliance agreed upon (from nominal involvement to regular engagement and assistance).

