



The Institute of Outdoor Theatre

About Us

The Institute of Outdoor Theatre (IOT) is the only association of its kind devoted exclusively to the opportunities and challenges faced by theatre companies in producing dramatic work for open air theatres. For the past fifty years, we have worked with our member organizations across North America to promote their shows, share best practices and cultivate an active network of theatre professionals working in our field. Our members include Shakespeare festivals, history plays, religious dramas and contemporary Broadway musicals and plays. Member budgets range from less than \$100,000 annually to over \$30 million.

FEASIBILITY STUDIES FOR NEW THEATRES

Feasibility studies for new outdoor theatres are one of the important services the Institute has provided to the field since its inception. Over sixty of these studies have been completed by experienced teams of consultants sent out by the Institute to review, teach and advise community leaders on such subjects as:

- Site Selection
- Theatre Design
- Project Timeline
- Script Development
- Financing and Budget
- Fundraising and Sponsorship
- Production Preparation and Design
- Organizational Structure and Personnel Descriptions
- Marketing and Tourism
- Economic Impact

Projects are generally preceded by the Institute's Director making a preliminary site visit to meet with the project's leaders, tour the proposed site and learn as much as possible about the hopes and intentions of the group. The purpose of this visit is twofold: to determine whether a formal feasibility study can be helpful and, if so, to agree upon the exact scope of work that it will cover. Preliminary site visits are usually for two-three days, and the Institute's consulting fee is USD\$1,000 per day (including travel time), plus travel, room and board.

If, after this initial visit, the Institute and local organization mutually decide to proceed, a proposal based on the particular needs of the new venture will be prepared. Our preferred approach is to organize a project into a series of stages each of which needs to be accomplished before the next one is started. The total proposal will consist a timeline for accomplishing all of these stages, the scope of work and outcomes for each, and the fees and costs associated with each stage. The total fees for a completed feasibility study may range between \$15,000-25,000 plus expenses, but the client organization only commits financially to one stage at the time. This process allows for the possibility of terminating the study after any stage if an insurmountable problem has arisen.

A typical feasibility study in its totality goes into considerable detail in analyzing the size of the theatre's potential audience, demographics and psychographics, the host community and anticipated support, amphitheatre and equipment budgets, capital campaign budgets, pre-opening expenses and pro-forma budgets for the first four years of operation. Significant attention is devoted to analysis of the proposed amphitheatre site.

Over the different stages of the project, the consulting team members are likely to include:

- An architect with experience in site selection and amphitheatre design who will concentrate on those requirements as well as the construction and equipment budget for the facility
- A production specialist who may be either a director, playwright, general manager or designer who will be advise on the proposed storyline, production schedule and production requirements
- A producer who will focus on potential for fundraising, administration and organizational structure of the theatre, the pro-forma four year budget, audience potential, marketing and the projected economic impact of the theatre on the community
- A tourism development specialist who will concentrate on evaluating the community, its tourism infrastructure, how an outdoor theatre would fit into the existing community, audience potential, ticket pricing, etc.

Depending on the individual project, we may ask the client theatre to collect a good deal of information through a survey we will provide in order to minimize consultant travel and hourly fees.

When our team members visit the community, interviews are typically conducted with a wide variety of community leaders, such as:

- Bankers
- Chamber of Commerce Director
- Local Political Figures
- Officers in Civic Clubs
- Radio or Television Managers
- Business Leaders
- Editor or Publisher of One or More Local Newspapers
- Hotel/ Motel Association Leaders
- Travel and Tourism Group Representatives
- Local Arts Projects Leaders
- Education Administrators and Educators
- Local Minority Leaders
- Historians
- Environmentalists

- Museum or Historical Restoration Personnel

The master contract for the study will stipulate the fees and estimated expenses for each stage, and the fees must be paid in advance of each stage. Because each feasibility study is unique, progress reports and recommendations will be made after each stage. It is important to note that either the client or the IOT may decide that the study should not be continued after a stage is complete and its direct expenses have been reimbursed, in which case no further payments will be required.

The feasibility studies commences when the contract is signed and payment in full is received for the first stage of the project. Travel expenses are expected to be reimbursed within thirty days of being submitted.

For further information about IOT feasibility studies or to discuss a particular community or situation, please contact the Institute:

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