

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 453**Are you a 501(c)3 organization in good standing with the IRS?**

Yes

According to your 501(c)3 letter, in what town is your official office located?

Hartford

Where will your project be performed or exhibited?

Hartford

Will this activity occur after August 1, 2025?

Yes

Are you a recent grantee?

Yes

Enter your Report Code

118929-Roberts2022

Organization Name

TheaterWorks Hartford

Organization's IRS Tax ID #

061172413

Principal Contact Name

Rob Ruggiero

Title

Artistic Director

Emailrob@twhartford.org**Phone**

(860) 527-7838

Address

233 Pearl Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06103
United States
[Map It](#)

Website<https://twhartford.org>

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 453**Amount requested this application**

\$25,000.00

What is the organization's mission/vision statement?

Mission: TWH shares intimate stories that engage all audiences. We create exceptional contemporary theater that entertains, celebrates new voices, and invites meaningful conversations.

Vision: To inspire a more meaningful connection to each other and to our community.

Provide a brief history of your organization and its activities.

Founded in 1985, TheaterWorks Hartford (TWH) was established for the purpose of providing the Metro Hartford region with Off-Broadway style professional theater. The company's artistic quality and record of achievement are embodied in its history of growth and accomplishment. TWH's success is further attributable to the specific, clearly defined vision that has shaped the organization, as well as an overall dedication to the highest achievable standards of artistic excellence.

Since its inception, TWH has produced a unique repertory reflecting the company's commitment to addressing a broad variety of issues with relevance for the community that it serves. Guided by a persuasive sense of artistic mission and strong professional management, TWH has, to-date, produced over 170 major plays, and currently presents 150 performances each season. TWH has also had their hand in developing new works, including sending shows to Broadway, off-Broadway and to other regional theaters around the country. With the lingering effects of the pandemic and patrons still hesitant to subscribe and to return to live, in-person performances our current subscriber base is nearly 3,000 with 25,000 attendances a year. Of note, according to industry standards a theater our size (as measured by seating capacity and budget size) typically would have 1,800 to 2,000 subscribers.

Describe the demographics of your audience/people served by your activities.

Our audience is made up of subscribers, single ticket buyers, and folks that receive tickets through our Education and Outreach Programs. Of our audience of 25,000, 90% live in the Greater Hartford region, 6% live in Connecticut, and 3% come from out of state. Ethnic composition is 72% white; 10% African-American; 14% Latino; 2% Asian and 2% other. Median age is 52; gender composition is 71% female and 29% male.

Producing virtually enabled us to reach audiences in 49 states and abroad.

Describe your organization's governance.

Despite its small size (17), the Board is effective and committed. It is comprised of a diverse group of civic-minded individuals that care about the theater and the community. All Board members support the theater financially, with in-kind services, and as subscribers. Current average tenure for board members is 8 years; average meeting attendance is 85%. Board committees include an Executive, Finance, Governance, Development, Marketing and Facilities. Ad hoc committees are formed as needed.

Please describe the diversity of your board by gender and ethnicity/race. Use percentages.

TWH prides itself on the diversity of its Board across all demographics, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Of the 17 members, 24% are BIPOC and 53% are female.

What percentage of your board makes personal financial contributions to your organization?

100% of our board makes financial contributions.

Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 453**Project Name**

The Cannibals of McGower County

Is this project related to the Visual Arts?

No

Project Description

TWH requests funding from The Roberts Foundation for the Arts to support the World Premiere production of THE CANNIBALS OF MCGOWER COUNTY by Drew Larimore and Directed by Jen Wieman. The show will run July 30 - August 30, 2026, with the possibility of a week extension.

This new play kicks off Larimore's Southern matriarch trilogy. McGower County is where we meet Lindalyn and Viola – two old friends and veteran salvagers – ransacking an abandoned barbecue restaurant in the heart of West Texas. Their routine is interrupted by a fatal encounter when an estranged family member appears, and working-class rage, deeply-held secrets, and a reckoning of the past collide. This darkly funny Southern Gothic story currently stars Margo Martindale ("The Sticky," "The Americans" and "Justified"), Constance Shulman ("Orange is the New Black" and "Doug") and Gus Birney (Bwy: "The Sign on Sydney Brustein's Window." TV: "The Shining Vale" and "Dickinson").

Total estimated project budget

\$170,863.00

Project start/opening

07/30/2026

Project end/closing

08/30/2026

Project venue

TheaterWorks Hartford

Project town

Hartford

Admission fees, attendance, and activity details

This season, TWH has 2,700 subscribers and is currently offering 4 play and 5 play (with SWEENEY TODD with HSC) subscriptions. Four play subscriptions range from \$190 to \$260 and five play range from \$240 to \$325. Single tickets range from "Value Seating" at \$25 to the best seats at \$105 for SWEENEY TODD at HSC. There are \$8 in fees added to each ticket. We also have two Pay-What-You-Want performances.

The production is scheduled to potentially reach 5,000 in-person viewers, paid and comp.

How do you intend to promote/market this project?

TWH has a solid track record of garnering publicity and critical reviews in all local outlets and national trade publications. Our season brochure is mailed to 14,000. For each production, TWH mails 17,500 postcards, distributes 100 posters and 5,000 playbills. TWH eblasts 19,000 patrons 15x each during the run for a total of 285,000 impressions. Sponsors are prominently acknowledged on all marketing material, in the lobby, on the theater's website and on the stream, if there is one.

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How is your organization going to use Roberts funding?

Roberts Funding will be used to cover a portion of the actor's salary, designer fees, and production elements like set, projections, lighting, sound, and costumes.

How will Roberts support be recognized?

The Roberts Foundation for the Arts' logo will be prominently displayed on all marketing material, including the postcards, programs, eblasts, website and at the entrance to the theater. In addition, the Foundation's support will be mentioned in the curtain speech. We are also happy to provide you with a full-house give for you to use or to gift it to another non-profit.

What is your organization's definition of artistic excellence?

TheaterWorks Hartford's guiding directive is to deliver a consistently exceptional and cohesive artistic product. This directive begins with the theater's leadership in Rob Ruggiero. Rob has a firm grasp of who we are, the work we produce and what our audience expects. Rob has established an exceptionally high standard of perfection, which he achieves by working collaboratively with the industry's most talented playwrights, designers and actors. TWH is exceptional in that though its professional designation is for a small professional theater (Equity SPT -10), it pays artistic staff at the same Equity rates as larger theaters, such as Hartford Stage (LORT-B). This is an important strategic decision that allows us to hire the best, most talented actors, directors and designers. TWH's productions consistently uphold this directive by presenting stellar casts and the most accomplished artistic and production teams to audiences from the greater Hartford area.

How does this project align with that definition, and how does it advance your mission?

THE CANNIBALS OF MCGOWER COUNTY squarely aligns with the company's vision of artistic excellence and its mission to create exceptional contemporary theater that entertains, celebrates new voices, and invites meaningful conversations. A star-studded world premiere, THE CANNIBALS OF MCGOWER COUNTY will be an intimate experience that engages all audiences with exacting production values and an incredibly talented cast.

In the words of Artistic Director, Rob Ruggiero, "We wanted our season finale to end with a World Premiere, celebrating our commitment to new work and new voices. In the spirit of playwrights Martin McDonagh and Sam Shepard, this Southern gothic tale is a powerhouse of a play to close out our 40th season."

How will your audience and the community benefit from this project?

TheaterWorks contributes to the enrichment and education of the communities it serves by promoting a general interest in the performing arts, expanding the cultural diversity of offerings available in Hartford and by increasing the community's knowledge, understanding and appreciation of theater.

TWH believes that excellence in theater combines complex meaning, provides new insights and new understandings of the world around us and is relevant to all. An excellent theatrical experience can help us make sense of our place in the world, ask questions, understand answers and appreciate things we may have never before experienced. A recent survey by Americans for the Arts found that 72% of Americans agree that arts and culture events provide safe spaces for sharing diverse ideas, and 39% report changing their opinions based on an arts experience.

From Arthur Miller, "The mission of the theatre, after all, is to change, to raise the consciousness of people to their human possibilities."

How will this project be evaluated?

Audience make-up and development are quantified through daily reporting procedures. TWH has a unique house management style and reservation system (we know our patrons by name), which makes it possible for us to build audience, one by one, relationship by relationship.

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We count house size, seats sold and the number of performances. Our goal is to fill houses at an average of 85 - 95% capacity.

TWH conducts post show audience surveys via email. Our audiences have been very receptive and the response rate has been excellent. At the end of the run, we will be able to report on what the audiences thought of the production and the theater. Other criteria for gauging success include critical review, single tickets sales including sales to new audience members, meeting outreach and education goals, as well as meeting artistic standards.

Cover letter

- [TWH-Cover-Cannibals.pdf](#)

Board list

- [TWH-Board-Directory-updated-3-13-25-1.pdf](#)

IRS 501(c)3 determination letter

- [TheaterWorks-Federal-Tax-Exempt-Letter-2018.pdf](#)

Financial statement

- [TheaterWorks-FY24-Audit.pdf](#)

Last year operational budget

- [TheaterWorks-FY24-Budget-to-Actuals.pdf](#)

Current year operational budget

- [TheaterWorks-FY25-Budget.pdf](#)

Balance sheet

- [TWH-Balance-Sheet-3.31.25.pdf](#)

Project budget

- [THE-CANNIBALS-Budget-4.15.25.pdf](#)

Does your organization produce an annual report?

No

Has your organization adopted a strategic plan?

Yes

Strategic plan

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- [TheaterWorks-Strategic-Plan-Final-6.12.15.pdf](#)

Have you contacted the Executive Director by email or phone to discuss this proposal?

Yes

Is your cover letter signed by your senior executive? on your letterhead? with your official office address?

Yes