

Government of India
Ministry of Culture

Studio Theatre Scheme

Serious theatre, like serious cinema, thrives on the support of smaller but more appreciative audiences. Small, non-proscenium rehearsal-cum-performance spaces, which can accommodate 100 to 200 viewers, is what the contemporary theatre most requires.

The Studio Theatre scheme, announced by the Prime Minister in his capacity as the Minister of Culture, seeks to address this long-experienced need of the creative groups engaged in the performing arts and follows several years of demands and discussions. With a generous support from the Government, going upto 60 % of the project cost, the performing arts groups will be helped to build their own "creative spaces", with a grant from the Ministry of Culture that can go upto Rs. 50 lakhs in 'metro cities' and Rs. 25 lakhs in other places, if they contribute their share of 40% of the project cost.

The annual salary grants for the artistes and gurus in the performing arts have already been enhanced, and this Studio Theatre scheme, it is hoped, would help these groups attain substantial 'economic independence', so that they are able to pursue their creative talents, without over-dependence on sponsors, or the government. The concept of smaller, experimental rehearsal spaces that will double up as performing spaces, being promoted and supported under this new Studio Theatre scheme, will facilitate theatre and other performing groups concentrate their energies on creativity rather than finding sponsors, help the performers draw better inspiration from more involved audiences, and, thus, benefit the cause of theatre, dance and music.

Titled as the "Scheme of Building Grants, including Studio Theatres", this Studio Theatre scheme replaces an existing scheme of the Ministry, which was known as the "Scheme of Building Grants to Cultural Organizations" and provided for construction of formal, conventional auditoria and concert halls, but offered no scope to promote such innovative, non-conventional creative spaces as Studio Theatres. Besides, that scheme was plagued with several inherent operational problems and offered a limited assistance of upto Rs. 15 lakhs only. Apart from highlighting the importance of supporting Studio Theatres, the scheme being introduced today makes many other improvements over the existing scheme.

Highlights of the Scheme

- The Scheme targets all kinds of cultural spaces for performing arts and specifically includes Studio Theatre as an innovative, cost-effective model of rehearsal-cum-performing spaces. The scheme will thus have two components. While one will cover the conventional performance spaces like concert halls, auditoria, etc. as in the existing scheme, the other will cover such non-conventional, experimental performance spaces as Studio Theatres.

- While the existing ceiling of Rs. 15 lakhs on assistance for any particular project is being raised to Rs. 25 lakhs, it provides a higher cap of Rs. 50 lakhs for the projects that involve new construction or purchase of built up space in the cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad, in view of higher costs of space in the metro cities.
- Subject to the ceiling of Rs. 25 lakhs or Rs. 50 lakhs, as the case may be, financial assistance from the Central Government will be upto 60% of the project cost (as against 50% in the existing scheme). Thus, the applicant organization's matching share is being reduced from 50% to 40% of the project cost.
- Under the existing scheme, grant is sanctioned for the construction of a building, but not for the purchase of a ready built space. Looking to the current scenario of urban development, especially in bigger cities, in the new scheme, it is proposed to allow purchase of built up space, as an alternative to the construction of a building.
- The requirement of approval of building plans and cost estimates by an Executive Engineer of PWD has been done away with. Now cost estimates and building plans approved by any Registered Architect would be accepted.
- Substantial procedural simplifications have been introduced in the new scheme. The list of documents required to be furnished by the applicants has also been reviewed and rationalized.
- With the introduction of the concept of Studio Theatre, the focus of the revised scheme would shift from civil structure to the technicals like electricals, lights and sound, interiors, equipments, etc. With this change in the focus of the eligible projects, the existing ceiling of Rs. 2.50 lakhs on the purchase of equipments has been dispensed with. Now there would be no cost sub-ceiling for the equipments.
- A Peer Group appraisal has been introduced for achieving a more realistic assessment of the project proposals. To ensure proper utilization of the funds, a physical inspection will be insisted upon before the release of final instalment.
- The system of release of various instalments of the sanctioned grant has been suitably modified and the condition that the building must get completed even before the final instalment is released has been dispensed with.
- Besides registered societies and trusts, not-for-profit companies will also be eligible for assistance under this scheme.

The detailed scheme would be available on the Ministry of Culture's website: www.indiaculture.nic.in from the noon of 8th January, 2011.