



SUMMARY

The grassroots music sector is under significant strain. Promoters, artists, venues, and festivals face rising costs, a cost of living squeeze on audience spend, limited or restricted funding, insufficient infrastructure, and a lack of investment in existing and emerging talent. This is creating an environment where risk-taking and innovation are stifled and the long-term sustainability of the music economy is at risk. Our aim is to keep live music at the heart of communities across the UK, by **protecting, expanding** and **supporting** the grassroots music ecosystem.

To achieve that aim, the live music industry has demonstrated real leadership in coming together to establish the LIVE Trust.

In the coming months and years, the LIVE Trust will make strategic investments in programmes that benefit actors across grassroots music; targeted interventions that will ease the pressure and open up new opportunities. Funding a blend of short and long-term programmes, local, regional and national in their remit, that are issue-led, sector-led and consistent with our values.

This document outlines **phase one** of LIVE Trust's funding strategy, addressing the immediate challenges identified through our trustees' industry expertise and in dialogue with representatives and grassroots practitioners from across our industry. As a new charity, we will be learning as we go, refining and expanding our approach as more funds come online and our initial investments are evaluated. This iterative approach will allow us to move with speed and agility, minimising bureaucracy while placing funds where they will have most impact.

It is not our intention to create a dependency culture where organisations end up relying on LIVE Trust funding to exist. Instead, by working *with* organisations, we will put funds to work on programmes that deliver for our promoters, venues, artists and festivals.

For the avoidance of doubt, the LIVE Trust is not seeking applications from individual venues, artists, promoters or festivals. We are looking to work with organisations that understand and deliver on interventions building resilience and capacity across grassroots music communities.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Economic Precarity

Across the industry there have been significant cost increases. Cost of utilities, rents, supply chain and general ongoing costs, coupled with additional business rates, NI, insurance and compliance costs (and the absence of a cultural rate of VAT on tickets) all make budget margins narrower and, along with consumer spending pressures, there is a notable negative impact on the financial security of the sector as a whole.

Audience Behaviour Shifts

Rising costs of living are affecting spending, along with changes in drinking habits and competing leisure options. Covid consequences linger, while ticket sales can be challenging, with audiences opting for high value, high reward events more often and booking later than in previous years.

Lack of Innovation & Diversification

Representatives across all four pillars reported a lack of innovation and diversification. Artists, in the face of major financial pressures, opting for fewer tour dates, sticking to major cities, along with venues, festivals and promoters unable to take a chance on new genres, performance styles, infrastructure investment or emerging artists and production crew. There is a growing challenge for more diversity and nuance in line-ups and touring, but compounding issues make this extremely difficult.

No Training and Support

Many staff across the pillars are freelance, facing precarious working conditions, lack of pay, policy and support. Individuals working across the live industry report mental health concerns, lack of wellbeing support and difficulty accessing networks, mentors and training.

LIVE TRUST

MISSION

LIVE Trust **protects, expands** and **supports** the grassroots music ecosystem across the UK.

While aware of the need to address the immediate crisis in grassroots music, the LIVE Trust will support and expand new and existing cross-sector programmes designed to have a long term positive impact on our sector - **improving the trading environment and unlocking opportunities for all.**

OBJECTIVES

Reduce Costs

Provide targeted support that helps to ease financial pressures by providing emergency relief and also supporting investment in sustainable growth.

Provide Expertise and Networks

Support programmes that strengthen peer-to-peer networks, learning, professional advice and collaborative ways of working to build resilience across the sector.

Invest in Infrastructure

Fund improvements in physical, digital, and organisational capacity, from equipment and accessible facilities to artist accommodation, policies, insurance, and health & safety standards. Creating safer, more inclusive environments.

Nurture Emerging Talent

Invest in the next generation of on and off stage live industry talent; supporting creators and creatives at the start of their careers enabling them to enter and thrive in the live music economy and protect its future.

Support Risk-Takers

Fund venues, artists, promoters and festivals to experiment, innovate, and expand the range of live music experiences available to audiences.

PHASE ONE DELIVERY



PHASE ONE will be an opportunity for organisations to apply for funding by invitation of LIVE Trust. This gives the trust an opportunity to:



Put money immediately where it is most needed, addressing the most urgent challenges the sector is facing



Fund high impact work across the sector



Develop Phase Two funding opportunities & long-term strategy



Build and test robust internal processes

PHASE ONE DELIVERY

Funded organisations will already exist and have the ability to deliver impactful programmes as soon as possible.

We will have a clear application process, ensuring programmes funded are benefiting diverse communities across the UK and supporting grassroots music scenes across all aspects of the ecosystem.

While the application process will be rigorous, the Trust team will learn from phase one, co-designing a system that remains agile and allows applicants to focus on addressing challenges not completing forms.

As we have stated from the outset, LIVE Trust will fund programmes that support venues, artists, promoters and festivals - separately and in combination. It was abundantly clear from our dialogue with stakeholders that the interconnected nature of live music means a programme will often have benefits for more than one sub-sector.

We are keen to encourage interventions that will deliver long-term benefits across four key industry pillars; artists, promoters, venues and festivals.

Across phase one, we will collect feedback from applicants on our processes and systems, as well as reporting on the impact of their programmes, helping us identify gaps and build a robust, long term funding strategy in phase two.

TIMELINE

Phase one will run from October 2025 through to 2026, with phase one grants being awarded in January.

Phase one's invited applications will enable us to build robust processes and systems through regular testing and feedback from users, while also directing funding straight to key areas of the ecosystem where it's needed most.

During this time, we'll start accepting expressions of interest for phase two funding.



ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for phase one funding, organisations and funded programmes must already exist and be invited to apply by LIVE trust.

We will not be funding any individuals, or new organisations or programmes at this early stage, but organisations interested in future funding will be able to apply with an expression of interest for 2026.

Eligible organisations for **phase one** must:

- Be based in the UK
- Have a bank account in their organisation's name
- Have a track record of high-quality programme delivery with clear impact
- Have the structure in place to quickly deliver programmed interventions in their context
- Be able to provide the following minimum governance documentation:
 - Proof of incorporation/registration and, if registered charity, then proof of registration
 - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy
 - Health & Safety and Safeguarding policies
 - Grant-making policy
 - Conflict of interest policy
- Be able to provide an outline project plan and impact measurement reporting
- Demonstrate a commitment to building equity in the music industry
- Show a commitment to maximising the percentage of funds that flows through to end users.

Funded programmes **must meet at least one** of the LIVE Trust objectives:

- Reduce costs
- Invest in infrastructure
- Support risk-takers
- Provide expert advice and networks
- Nurture emerging talent on and off stage

EXPECTATIONS & IMPACT

Through phase one funding, we expect to see organisations being able to deliver vital support to their communities across the music industry. In line with LIVE Trust's objectives, we'll be able to see:

Greater financial resilience across the board for the grassroots sector and those working in it and reduced exposure to escalating costs.

Safer, more inclusive and professional environments for everyone performing, working at or attending grassroots music events in venues, outdoor events and communities.

Expanded artistic innovation and diversity of programming with more live music being accessible to more audiences in more places throughout the UK made possible by funding risk-taking and experimentation.

Strengthened and expanded networks of support for everyone across the sector, both online and in person, with expertise and professional advice being easier to access.

A sustainable pipeline of talent on and off stage, ensuring the future strength of the UK live music economy.



LIVE Trust
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