

# Community Theatre Trends 2023-2024: A Survey

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## Data Sources

### Universe Overview

332 Theatres participated in the survey

### Responses by State

Alabama 8, Alaska 1, Arizona 6, Arkansas 4, California 20, Colorado 1, Connecticut 8, Delaware 2, Florida 18, Georgia 9, Hawaii 4, Idaho 3, Illinois 10, Indiana 10, Iowa 10, Kansas 6, Kentucky 8, Louisiana 2, Maine 1, Maryland 4, Massachusetts 7, Michigan 13, Minnesota 7, Mississippi 2, Missouri 4, Montana 3, Nebraska 4, New Hampshire 2, New Jersey 6, New Mexico 4, New York 12, North Carolina 12, North Dakota 1, Ohio 8, Oklahoma 5, Oregon 11, Pennsylvania 19, South Carolina 4, South Dakota 1, Tennessee 8, Texas 22, Utah 2, Virginia 6, Washington 13, West Virginia 4, Wisconsin 8, Wyoming 4, US Military 1 (Germany).

Missing states Rhode Island, Nevada,

Outside United States- Ontario 1, Uganda 1

[For a full list  
of responding theatres, see page 5]

## What the Data Reveals

[Data is also available in the form of charts and graphs, in a second PDF document.]

Community Theatres span the spectrum of budget, seating capacity and community populations. The largest segment of theatres responding had smaller budgets with smaller theatre seating capacity and draw from smaller community population bases.

### BUDGET

From a budget perspective the largest segment of community theatres in the survey (28.5%) had budgets of less than \$50,000. The next largest segment were budgets of \$100-\$249,000 (24%). Overall, 70.7% of community theatres have budgets of less than \$250,000 (Under \$50,000 (28.6%), \$50,000-\$99,999 (18.1%), \$100-\$250,000 (23.9%)). \* I received several comments about budgets of less than \$20,000.

### SEATING CAPACITY

The largest segment of community theatres (29.7%) have 100-199 seats followed by theatres with 50-99 seats (22.7%).

Overall, 75.8% of theatres surveyed have 299 seats or less. (49 or less (3.8%), 50-99 (22.7%), 100-199 (29.7%), and 200-299 seats (19.4%).

### POPULATION BASE

The largest segment in the survey was a population base of under 25,000 people (24.2%). The second largest block was 100,000-250,000 (18.4%) \* Note this was possibly because of the larger sample size. However almost even with that was the third block of 25,000-50,000 people (17.5%).

If we look at connected segments, the largest connected segment was under 50,000 (41.8%), 50,000-100,000 people (23.6%), and 100,000-500,000 people (28.7%), theatres with populations of 500,000 to over a million people accounted for 6.4%.

### INCOME

Community Theatre across a broad spectrum are working with positive budgets coming out of Covid with a few exceptions. Financially 75% of theatres reported budgets that were break even or a surplus (51% break even, 24% surplus, 24% deficit.)

Most community theatres rely primarily on ticket sales and class fees for their income. 50% rely on earned income, 35% on an even mix of earned and contributed income, and only 14% primarily on contributed income.

A troubling spot is that over the past 6 years however 75% of theatres are seeing flat or decreasing sales trends in season tickets. (38% decrease, 37% flat, 23% seeing an increase.) Another trend has 45% of theatres reporting that total ticket sales versus 2019 had decreased, with 22% remaining the same. Some theatres were having success with 32% of theatres able to increase their total ticket sales

### PRICE HIKES

Compared to 2019, 58% of theatres had increased their ticket prices while 38% stayed the same (2% reduced prices.)

### CURRENT AND FUTURE TRENDS

For the current season the majority (52%) see tickets sales remaining stable with 39% seeing an upward trend in tickets. Only 8% see a decrease in ticket sales. Looking ahead to next season 30% see tickets continuing to increase with 22% remaining the same. 45% of theatres however couldn't predict a future trend at this time. Only 3% saw tickets decreasing for next season.

### SPONSORSHIP

On the sponsorship income side in the current year was a mixed picture. Equal numbers 31% saw sponsor income increase and 31% saw it decrease. 25% saw sponsor income remain the same. The number of sponsors however was slightly different with 25% of theatres seeing less sponsors A smaller 20% segments was seeing an increase in the number of sponsors. 16% stayed the same. \*Note not all theatres answered these questions because some do not have sponsors.

### EXPENSES

On the expense side since 2019, 68% of theatres had increased their expense budgets while 22% had stayed the same. 8% decreased their expense budgets.

## PROGRAMMING

The majority of theatres 51% produced the same number of shows as before. 23.4% increased the number of shows while 25.5% decreased the number of shows. The largest block of theatres, 46.2% produced more well-known titles. 37.4% made no changes to the shows they selected and 16.3% produced more titles that audiences may not know.

It is interesting that 53.4% of theatres say they are programming the same type of shows as professional theatres around them. 28.3% choose more well-known titles and 18.2% choose more risky shows than professional theatres. In two recent surveys of titles selected for the current season AACT survey had the top 10 titles filled mostly with well-known shows and TCG (Theatre Communications Group) had the top 10 titles for professional groups as much more risky and unknown titles. In looking at the professional productions slated in American Theatre Magazine across the country the majority of professional theatres had well known titles in many of the seasons similar to community theatre along with the risky shows. Just the top shows were different.

In choosing shows that feature diverse writers or performers the largest block of theatres 37.4% said they were doing about the same programming as they were in 2019. 31.5% of theatres said they were selecting more shows featuring diverse roles than before and 22.7% said they were selecting more shows written by diverse writers. 24.4% said they have not been able to increase diversity because they lacked the resources. This question had a large number of other answers in the survey.

## ACTORS AND VOLUNTEERS

The largest block 40.7% have seen an increase in their acting pool this season. 31.3% have remained the same with 26.1% seeing a decrease in acting pool of talent. However, in tech and general volunteers the numbers are reversed, 45.1% of theatres have seen a marked decrease in volunteers with 26.6% staying the same and only 15.2% seeing an increase.

## PAID STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS

The largest group by almost 10% were theatres who paid staff 54.25%. 45.75% did not have paid staff. In the breakdown by budget category this became more apparent as over 75% of theatres with budgets under \$100,000 didn't have paid staff and 75% of theatres with budgets over \$100,000 had paid staff. Of those theatres with paid staff 73.1% had all of their positions filled but 26.8% were still looking for employees.

## PAYING PARTICIPANTS

Many theatres have strong opinions about paying people involved in productions. 37.2% said they only paid professionals for services they do for a living (musicians, directors, designers, etc..) 34% reimbursed participant only for out-of-pocket expenses. 26.1% don't pay anyone.

When we break these numbers down by budget size a different picture emerges. Theatres with budgets of under \$50,000 show 50% don't pay anyone while 50% pay something. That number changes significantly moving above the \$50,000 threshold and then it is only about 11%-23% that don't pay anyone. Over 75% are paying production participants something.

Other The next largest block was the OTHER comments. These had quite a few who said they gave stipends or funds to directors, tech crews, and other people who had to put in the most time on a show other than actors. \*Some theatres charged actors participation fees or costume fees. I “suspect” these were more youth theatres with “pay to play” or tuition-based type of shows.

- 13.4% of theatres responded that they were paying a standard small stipend/reimbursement to cover gas/travel, baby sitting, or other personal expenses related to rehearsing or performing to all actors and crews.
- 8.2% paid a stipend on a sliding scale to certain people depending on how much time they put in for a show.

#### **Most Critical issues facing theatres.**

1. Audiences/ticket sales (90 responses): Getting people to buy tickets. (Decline in season and single tickets from 2019)
2. Income Earned and contributed – Donors & Grants/Sponsors (87 responses): Getting enough income to sustain the theatre. Increased expenses are causing challenges and income isn’t matching the increases.
3. Volunteers-Actors, Tech (72 Responses): A drop in number of people volunteering and many theatres having hard time getting younger volunteers and actors.
4. Facilities (42 responses): Increased costs and equipment needs to continue
5. DEI in trying to attract talent and audiences was in 17 responses), but those could have been added to the Volunteer/Talent and Audiences segment, as well.

Several comments were made about the increased expenses citing royalties and rights increases.

#### **What can AACT do to help? 216 comments**

1. Help find grant opportunities and help with writing grants (31 responses)
2. Marketing help to attract audiences (29 responses)
3. Volunteer recruitment and management. How to find, and manage directors, actors, tech, board members (20 responses)
  1. Related to this was help with finding diverse participants and audiences (10 responses)
4. Help with ideas and strategies to generate income (16 responses)
5. Strategic planning and board management (14 responses)
6. Help with negotiating rights and royalties Many small theatres struggle with the costs and paying up front for rights, royalties, and materials (14 responses)
7. Help identifying and cultivating sponsors (9 responses)
8. Advocacy for state and federal sources (6 responses)
9. Donor development and management help. (4 responses)
9. Season planning help in season selection and resources to find directors (4 responses)
10. Technical resources and help (6 responses)

## Survey Responses by budget size

We had 8 Budget categories

Size Budget	Number of theatres
Under \$50,000	98
\$50-\$99,999	62
\$100-\$249,999	82
\$250-\$499,999	44
\$500,000-\$1Million	28
\$1M-\$2Million	17
\$2M-\$4Million	9
\$4Million+	2

### Budgeting by Category analysis

As theatres grow in budget size the number of theatres reporting a deficit budget also grows except for the \$4M+ budget category.

### Paid staff versus No Paid Staff

The numbers show a clear dividing line at the \$100,000 budget threshold in staffing responses.

## Theatres Participating in this Survey

### Alabama

Auburn Area Community Theatre  
South City Theatre  
Southeast AL Community Theatre  
Pike Road Theatre Company  
Self Express Productions, Inc  
The Mountain Valley Playhouse  
Theatre Huntsville  
Wetumpka Depot Players

### Alaska

Pier One Theatre, Inc.

### Arizona

Ghostlight Theatre  
La Posada—The Stage Play  
Starlight Community Theater  
Theatre Works  
Theatrikos  
Yuma Community Theater

### Arkansas

Argenta Community Theater  
Community Theatre of Cabot  
The Foundation of Arts  
Fort Smith Little Theatre

### California

Ariel Theatrical, Inc.  
Camino Real  
Catch a Star Theatrical Players  
Golden Chain Theater  
Kentwood Players  
Olive Branch Theatricals  
Tehachapi Community Theatre Association  
The WIYS Actors  
Truckee Community Theater  
Chino Community Children's Theatre  
By the Seas Productions  
Dramaworks WestEnd Theater  
Landmark Musical theatre  
Pinole Community Players  
Riverfront Playhouse

Sonoma Arts Live Theater Company  
Theatre on the Ridge  
Tulane County Encore Theatre Company  
Woodland Opera House  
Sutter Street Theatre

#### Colorado

Northglenn Arts

#### Connecticut

The Suffield Players  
Town Players of New Canaan/Powerhouse Theatre  
Drama Works Theatre Company  
Brookfield Theatre  
Curtain Call, Inc.  
New Britain/No Boundaries Youth Theater  
The Meeting House Players  
The Lexington Players

#### Delaware

Delaware Children's Theatre  
Possum Point Players

#### Florida

Carrollwood Players Theatre  
Cultural Park Theatre Company, Inc.  
Daytona Playhouse  
Manatee Performing Arts Center  
Titusville Playhouse  
Venice Theatre  
Art Center Theatre  
Cultural Park Theatre  
High Springs Playhouse  
Jodickproductions  
Osceola Arts  
Pensacola Little Theatre  
The Barn Theatre Inc  
The Key Player  
The Naples Players  
The Sarasota Players  
Theatre Tallahassee  
Vero Beach Theatre Guild

#### Georgia

The Masquers Theatre Guild  
Franklin Playhouse  
Holly Theatre Community Center Inc

New Horizon Community Theatre  
Newnan Theatre Company  
Rome Little Theatre  
The Holly Theatre  
Theatre Macon  
Douglasville Community Theater

#### Hawaii

Aloha Theater  
Honolulu Theatre for Youth  
Manoa Valley Theatre  
Maui On Stage

#### Idaho

Boise Little Theater  
Oxford Peak Arts Council  
Stage Coach Theatre

#### Illinois

Big Noise Theatre  
DLO Musical Theatre  
Stage 212  
AgeQuake Theatre  
Kankakee Valley Theatre Association  
Pallette Masque and Lyre  
PM&L Theatre  
The Factory Theatre  
Community Players of Streator Inc  
Wheaton Drama

#### Indiana

Civic Theatre of Greater Lafayette Inc  
Chico Street Theatre  
Curtain Call Theatre for Children  
Footlight Players Inc  
Haywood Theatre Group  
Kokomo Civic Theatre  
Mud Creek Players  
Pulse Opera House  
Wabash Area Community Theater  
Washington County Actors Community Theatre

#### Iowa

Ames Community Theater (ACTORS)  
Ankeny Community Theatre  
Boone Community Theatre  
CAP Theatre

Des Moines Community Playhouse  
Spencer Community Theatre  
The Grand Opera House  
Theater Cedar Rapids  
Waterloo Community Playhouse  
Webster City Community Theater

#### Kansas

Family Community Theatre at the Flag Theatre  
Marysville Ara Community Theatre  
Salina Senior Theatre Project  
Theatre Lawrence  
Theatre Salina  
Wichita Community Theatre

#### Kentucky

Footlighters inc.  
Market House Theatre  
Marshall County Arts Commission  
Oldham County Community Theatre  
Playhouse in the Park  
Village Players of Fort Thomas  
Barn Lot Theater  
The Far Off Broadway Players

#### Louisiana

Theatre Baton Rouge  
Ascension Community Theatre

#### Maine

Waterville Opera House

#### Maryland

Church Hill Theatre, Inc  
The Colonial Players  
UpStage Artists, Inc.  
Theatreworks Live

#### Massachusetts

Acme Theater  
Calliope Productions  
Colonial Chorus Players  
Holliston's Washington Street Players Inc  
The Cannon Theater  
Jokes Players  
Belmont Dramatic Club, Inc

#### Michigan

Cadillac Footlights, Inc  
Community Circle Theatre  
Grand Rapids Civic Theatre  
Players de Non Inc  
Theatrical Synergy  
Enter Stage Right  
Flint Community Players  
Grosse Pointe Theatre  
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre  
Old Town Playhouse  
Owosso Community Players  
Three Rivers Community Players  
Branch County Community Theatre

#### Minnesota

Grand Marais Playhouse  
Lakeshore Players Theatre  
Ole Olson Onstage  
The FungusAmongus Players of Dassel-Cokato  
Bemidji Community Theater  
Norther Starz Center for the Performing Arts  
Great Theatre

#### Mississippi

Biloxi Little Theatre  
Starkville Community Theatre

#### Missouri

A Call to Conscience Interactive Theater for  
Social Change  
Blue Springs City Theatre  
Summit Theatre Group  
Kirkwood Theatre Guild

#### Montana

Billings Studio Theatre  
Grandstreet Theatre  
NOVA Center for the Performing Arts

#### Nebraska

Community Players, Inc.  
Gothenburg Community Playhouse Association  
Hastings Community Theatre  
Lincoln Community Playhouse

New Hampshire

Manchester Community Theatre Players  
The Majestic Theatre

New Jersey

Bergen County Players  
Cranford Dramatic Club (CDC Theatre)  
Moorestown Theater Company  
West Hudson Arts & Theater Company  
Somerset Valley Players  
The MTM Players

New Mexico

Artesia Bulldogs  
The Adobe Theater  
Vortex theatre  
Taos Onstage

New York

Aurora Players  
CenterStage Theatre at the JCC o Rochester  
County Players, Inc  
Elmwood Community Playhouse, Inc  
Rochester Community Players  
Rome Community Theater  
Schenectady Light Opera Company  
Sullivan County Dramatic Workshop  
The Aurora Players, Inc  
HOME MADE THEATER Inc  
South Shore Theatre Experience  
North Franklin Theatre Group

North Carolina

Hendersonville Theatre  
Ovation  
The Old Theater  
Davidson Community Players  
Harnett Regional Theatre  
Hickory Community Theatre  
Spotlight Community Theatre  
Studio 1  
Theatre Charlotte  
Union County Playmakers  
Old Courthouse Theatre  
Thailan Association Community Theatre

North Dakota

Dakota Stage

Ohio

The Sunset Players  
3B Productions  
CenterStage Players  
Fairview Park Fine Arts & Theatre Assn  
INNOVAtheatre  
Loveland Stage Company  
Rise Up Arts Alliance  
Van Wert Civic Theatre

Oklahoma

Gaslight Theatre  
Theatre Tulsa  
OnStage Woodward  
Sand Springs Community Theatre  
Shawnee Little Theatre

Oregon

Actors Cabaret of Eugene  
Cascades Theatrical Company  
Coaster Theatre Playhouse  
College community Theater  
Cottage Theatre  
Gallery Players  
New Century Players Community Theatre  
Pentacle Theatre  
Ten Fifteen Productions  
Very Little Theatre  
Twilight Theater Company

Pennsylvania

Blue Ridge Theatre Guild  
Brookville Community Theater  
Butler Little Theatre  
DCP Theatre  
DreamWrights Center for Community Arts  
Erie Playhouse  
Forge Theatre  
Indigo Family Theater  
Punxsutawney Theatre Arts Guild  
The Pennsylvania Playhouse  
Chambersburg Community Theatre  
Dingmans Ferry Theatre  
Playcrafters of Skippack  
Playhouse A McConnellstown  
Reading Theater Project (through GRACT)  
Schumo Theater at the Yocum Institute of Arts  
Education



The Academy Theatre  
Gettysburg Community Theatre

South Carolina

Florence Little Theatre  
Greer Children's Theatre  
Orangeburg Part-Time Players  
Showtime Theatre Company

South Dakota

Belle Fourche Area Community Theater

Tennessee

Oak Ridge Playhouse  
Robertson County Players  
StoryBook Players and Studio Players  
Theatre Memphis  
Cookeville Theatre Co aka Storyteller Theatre  
Co  
Chattanooga Theatre Centre  
Cookeville Performing Arts enter  
There Bristol

Texas

Amarillo Little Theatre  
Backdoor Theatre  
Basin Theatre Works  
Beaumont Community Players dba Southeast  
Texas Stages  
Boerne Community Theatre  
Central Texas Theatre at the Vive Les Arts  
Society  
Circle Arts Theatre  
El Paseo Arts Foundation  
Georgetown Palace Theatre  
Playhouse 2000  
Plaza Theatre Company  
Second Chance Players  
Stage Door Inc  
Stage Notes Playhouse  
Stage Center  
The Theatre Company of Bryan/College Station  
The Wimberely Players  
Theatre Frisco  
Waco Theatre  
Baytown Little Theater  
HillCountry Community Theatre  
Sherman Community Players/Theatricks

Utah

Hale Centre Theatre  
Pleasant Grove Players

Vermont

The Dorset Players, Inc

Virginia

Encore Stage & Studio  
Reston Community Players  
Colonial Beach Playhouse  
Renaissance Theatre Company  
The Prizery  
The Schultz Theater - dab Off Broadway Players

Washington

Outcast Productions  
Stage Kids  
Tacoma Musical Playhouse  
The Actors Theater of Orcas Island  
Warehouse Theatre Company  
Princess Theatre  
Stage West Community Theatre  
Tacoma Little Theatre  
The Jewel Box Theatre  
Valley Theatre Company  
Regional Theatre of the Palouse  
Edmonds Driftwood Players  
Peninsula Players

West Virginia

Apollo Civic Theatre, Inc  
Old Opera House Theatre Company, Inc  
Mountain Roots Community Theatre  
Towngate Theatre

Wisconsin

Sunset Playhouse  
West Bend Theatre Company, Inc  
Attic Theatre Inc  
Chippewa Valley Theatre Guild  
Hardscrabble Players Inc/Red  
Janesville Performing Arts Center  
Kettle Moraine Players  
Racine Theatre Guild

Wyoming

Gillette Community Theatre  
Cheyenne Little Theatre Players  
Goshen Community Theatre, Inc  
The Horizon Theatre

US Military

Amelia Earhart Playhouse Wiesbaden

Ontario Canada

London Community Players

Kampal Uganda

Bingo local film Artist Association Theatre