



General Manager Recruitment Pack

January 2025



About Talking Birds

Talking Birds is a theatre company based in Coventry since 1992, known for its thoughtful, playful, resonant, mischievous and transformative meditations on people and place. Our values (Kindness, Brilliance, Transformation, Curiosity, Wellbeing, Collaboration) combined with our 'six big ideas' (about artist process and support; access and participation; climate conscience; agency, equity and diversity; nurture and resilience) weave through our work and guide our choices and interactions.

We put accessibility at the heart of our work and are pioneering affordable, mobile captioning with [The Difference Engine](#). Work at our purpose-built shared creation space, [The Nest](#), models an active commitment to climate justice and equitable, regenerative relationships (with people and planet) - here we explore and share [Regenerative Creative Practice](#) with a diverse, climate-conscious community of artists (we call them the Flock) engaged through our [Nest Residencies](#), support network (F13) and [Third Fridays](#) programme.

We are a small, friendly core team that nonetheless hits well above its weight, working with numerous performers and other creative practitioners on varied types and scales of project each year including, in 2021, our [Citizens' Assembly on Arts & Culture](#) (the first of its kind in the UK) which convened a cross-section of Coventry people to map out a better future for our city through a [series of recommendations](#), which now guide much of our (hyper-local) activity.

Talking Birds has been regularly funded by Arts Council, England (and previously West Midlands Arts) since 2002 as a Regional then National Portfolio Organisation.

Job Description - Summary

Job Title: General Manager

Hours: 0.8FTE (30 hrs based on 37.5 hrs per week)

Contract: Permanent

Salary: £32,760 pro rata (£26,208 for 0.8 FTE)

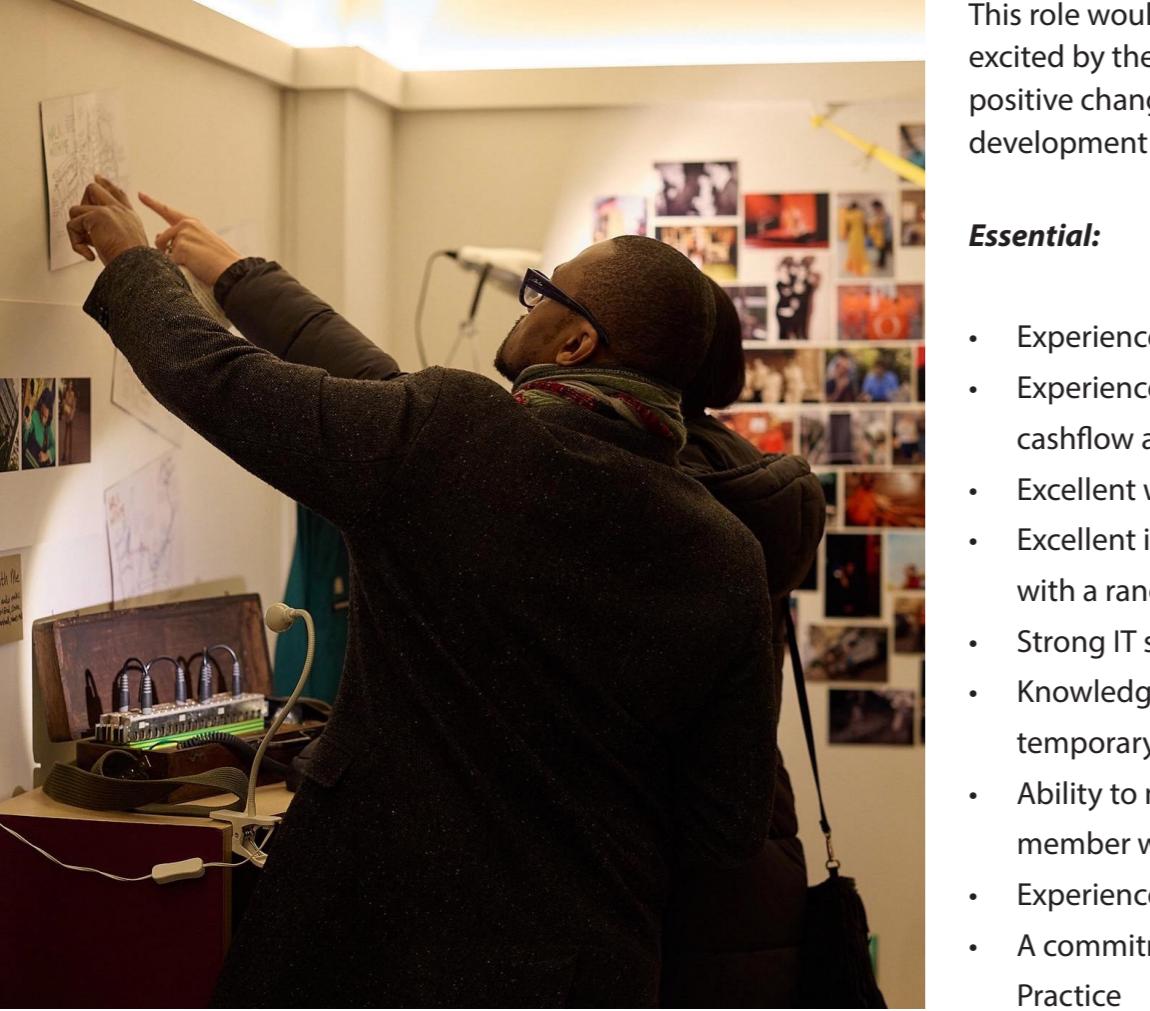
Purpose: to manage the company's finances, office systems and project administration in an ethical and regenerative way, consistent with the values of the company.

Location: The Nest, Coventry

Annual Leave: 25 days pro rata plus public holidays

Notice period: 2 months (following probationary period of 3 months)





Person Specification:

This role would suit a professional administrator/manager who is excited by the transformative power of the arts and its capacity to effect positive change - and who would like to play a key role in the growth and development of Regenerative Creative Practice at The Nest in Coventry.

Essential:

- Experience of company administration
- Experience of financial management including book-keeping, budgets, cashflow and accounts
- Excellent written, verbal communication and numeracy skills.
- Excellent interpersonal skills with the ability to collaborate effectively with a range of people
- Strong IT skills (we use Xero accounting package)
- Knowledge of HR processes including working with freelancers and temporary company members
- Ability to negotiate, problem solve and be a solutions-focused team member who likes a challenge
- Experience of project monitoring and evaluation
- A commitment to supporting and promoting Regenerative Creative Practice

Desirable:

- Interest/experience in theatre/arts
- Experience of supporting a company Board including preparation of board papers, reports and minutes
- Experience of VAT accounting/returns, payroll and pensions
- Experience of statutory reporting to Companies House & HMRC
- Experience of current Arts Council England NPO reporting procedure
- Knowledge of Arts Council England 'Investment Principles'
- Experience of developing funding bids and working with funders
- Knowledge of Data Protection legislation
- Knowledge of Equality legislation and of access provision
- Knowledge of Safeguarding procedures





Where & how you'll be working

The Nest is a purpose-built creative space, including multiple studios, rehearsal/workshop/creation, social gathering and office spaces. It has been created with care as home to both Talking Birds' creative work (including our Outdoor Arts/touring productions) and also to support the local non-building-based artistic community, providing varied opportunities for collaborative and sector development.

Talking Birds works with and supports a variety of artists, including a wide range of Nest residents who inhabit our studios on a rolling basis, and offers a positive, varied and often lively working environment. We curate our regular events programme, Third Fridays at The Nest, to make opportunities that collectively explore, develop and nurture regenerative (for people and planet) living and working.

We are looking for someone who enjoys working as part of a team while being independently motivated to play their part in delivering an ambitious and wide-ranging programme of work. While the primary responsibilities are listed below, sometimes the whole team will be asked to muck in to get whatever needs to be done, done (and we will almost certainly draw on any transferable skills).

Although not an artistic role, the General Manager is a big part of a small team (you'll be working alongside Co-Artistic Directors Janet Vaughan and Derek Nisbet, and Freelance Outdoor Arts Producer Lou Lomas) - and we ask everyone in that team to draw on their knowledge, skills, lived experience and creative ideas in working collectively to shape the company's vision and deliver its programme - encompassed by the belief that anyone can have 'the best idea in the room'.

Talking Birds is a member of the Independent Theatre Council and Outdoor Arts UK and regularly consults with both on company matters as well as attending training, conferences and networks.

Specific responsibilities

This role has some very specific areas of responsibility which cut across all our projects and activities; we know you may not have done all of these things before, and that's OK. We anticipate some areas will need more time to grow into, and we have built in capacity to support that transition.

Financial Planning & Management

- Lead on financial management, balancing creative ambition with sound financial planning
- Manage project finances (in liaison with other team members) & cashflow
- Issue contracts, invoices & make payments
- Manage day to day book-keeping using Xero accounting package, including payroll, pension & VAT returns
- Ensure quarterly management accounts are submitted to the Board and funders
- Liaise with company accountant re production/submission of annual accounts, tax returns etc.

Funding

- Be lead contact for Arts Council England and other funders, ensuring conditions of grants are met with timely reporting etc
- Contribute to/lead on production of funding bids as agreed

Monitoring and evaluation

- Oversee and monitor project schedules, evaluation, data collection and fulfilling of funding obligations/Strategic Objectives

Working with the Board

- Support Talking Birds' Board meetings, including scheduling and preparation/delivery of reports/papers
- Act as Company Secretary

Company Management & Administration

- Manage administration of the Difference Engine, our in-pocket subtitling system which is used by companies across the UK
- Work with our Outdoor Arts Producer & co-AD to support touring logistics & identify new opportunities for the Outdoor Arts Portfolio
- Be first point of contact for statutory bodies, partners, funders etc.
- Maintain insurance and ensure GDPR, Health & Safety and safeguarding compliance
- Ensure company policies are kept up to date
- Track training requirements/updates for staff and directors
- Manage any temporary/junior or project administration, funding allowances
- Plus other tasks commensurate with the role

Responsibilities shared across the team

- Develop and promote the company's work, values and strong commitments to climate justice, and broadening access to and diversity within arts and culture
- Act as 'ternkey' one day a week, and as cover for colleagues as needed - with responsibility for running the building, being a point of contact for Nest residents, and sounding the communal lunch bell
- Attend and contribute to company meetings, planning and strategy, being a key part of our collective decision-making
- Keep up to date on what is going on in relevant sectors - within the arts, arts and other areas of interest to the company - within Coventry, the region and nationally, in particular via the ITC & Outdoor Arts UK
- Help maximise & administrate earned income streams to feed back into supporting the work of our artists' community
- Attend relevant networking & training events locally, regionally or nationally.
- Identify opportunities for partnerships and projects



Terms and conditions

Hours

Part-time 0.8 FTE (30 hrs based on 37.5 hrs per week)
Normal working hours 9 - 5 (some flexibility possible).

Working patterns

We are open to different working patterns (by agreement), and we are committed to family- and carer-friendly working. We recognise that part time staff may have other work which may mean a certain amount of flexibility is needed from time to time. We operate a time off in lieu approach, which can support flexible working.

Every member of staff has one day a week when it is their responsibility to open and close up the Nest, which means there will be at least one day when the post holder needs to work a full day, from 9am to 5pm (if this would preclude you from applying, please do talk to us, as it may be possible to find an alternative arrangement).

We have occasional evening/weekend events for which the team shares responsibility for managing, and against which time off in lieu can be taken.

Location

The role is based at The Nest, near Coventry City Centre. Whilst there is some flexibility for occasional remote working, the hands-on nature of the company's work and the staff team's shared role in supporting the creative community around The Nest means that this post is predominantly office-based.

Salary

£32,760 pro rata (£26,208 for 0.8 FTE)

Reasonable time off in lieu (at a time agreed with the Co-Artistic Directors) will be granted for excess hours worked. Occasionally, by agreement, additional pay may be offered instead of time off in lieu.

Benefits

There will be 20 days of paid holiday per year (pro rata of 25 day FTE per year). In addition, there is entitlement to the usual public holidays in England and Wales on a pro rata basis.

In addition to the statutory holiday, we also give/take an extra week's closure/winter break at Christmas, and generally avoid scheduling large projects or activity at The Nest during the school holidays.

We are committed to providing any access support you might need for you to achieve your best work and be happy in your role.

We believe staff wellbeing is important, and that we all have a right to, and responsibility for, ensuring that our work is enjoyable - as well as offering positive creative challenges and the opportunity to make a difference.

We're keen to support (as well as to initiate) Continuing Professional Development opportunities for team members - both individual and collective. In the past, this has taken the form of a learning opportunity of the individual's choice taken during the summer, as well as support to attend training with ITC and other providers as appropriate.

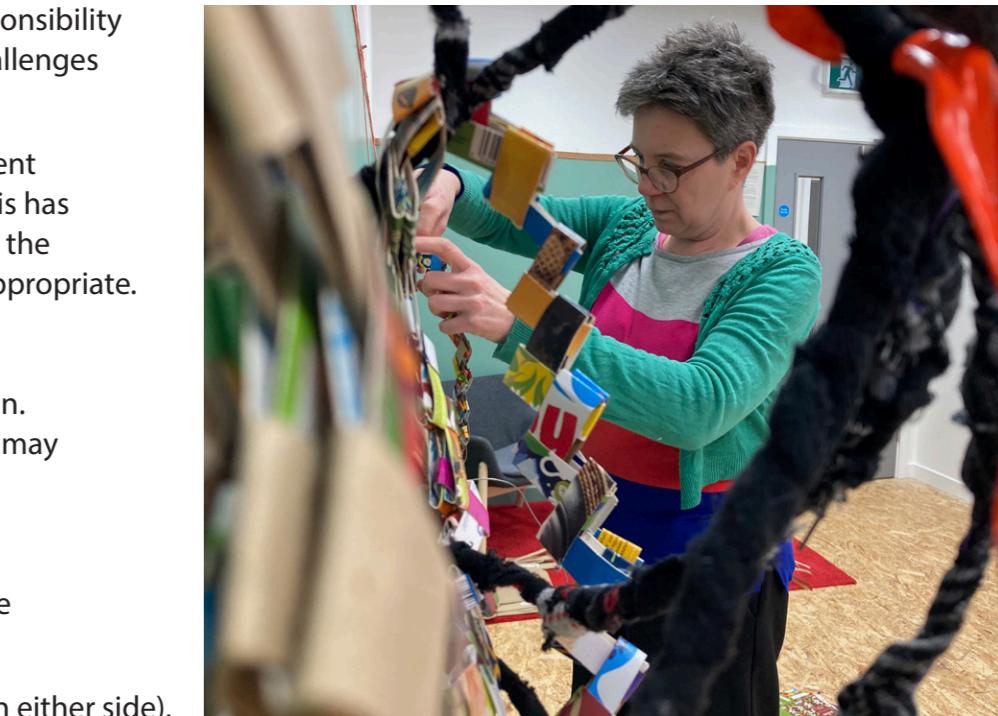
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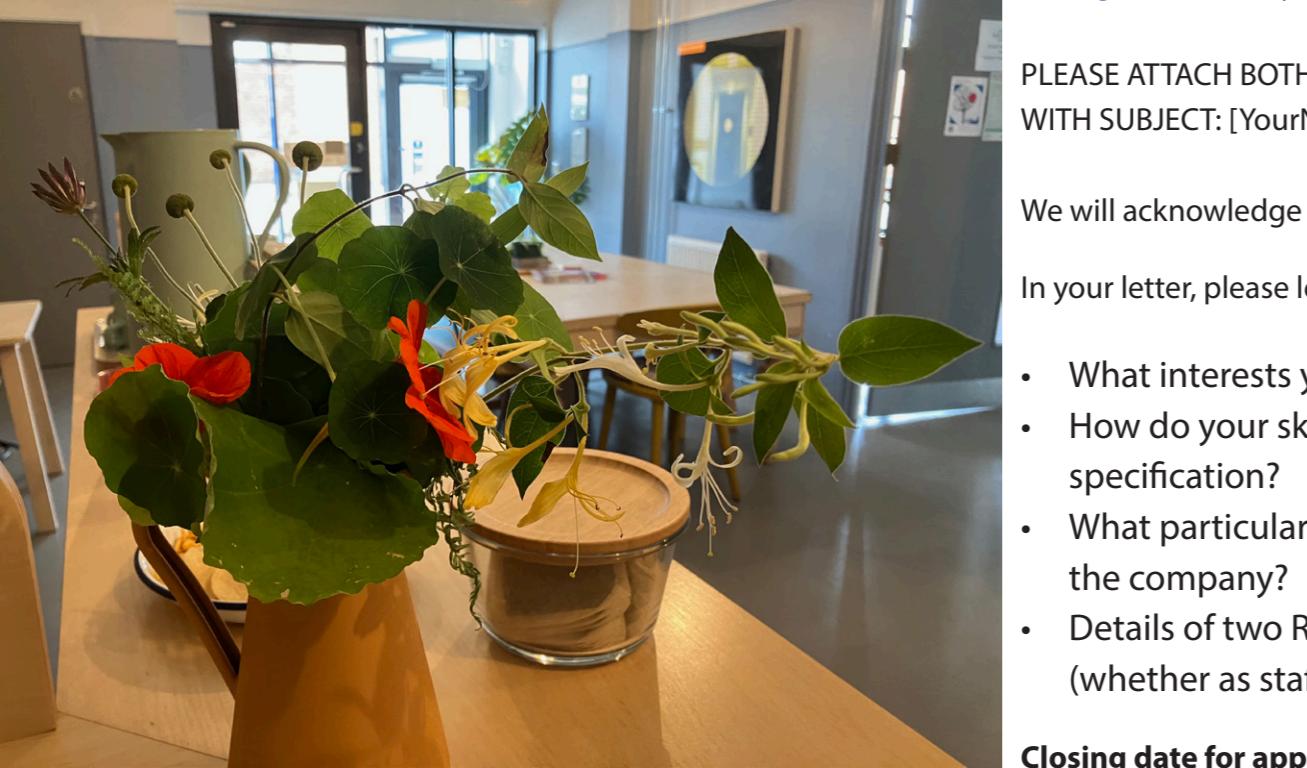
Talking Birds has a company pension which the postholder will be eligible to join. Employer contributions will be 3% and employee contributions 5%. Employees may opt out of this if they wish.

Other

Applicants must already have the right to work in the UK, and be able to provide evidence of this before any confirmation of appointment.

There will be a mutual probationary period of 3 months (with 1 week's notice on either side).





How to apply:

If you think you might be the person we are looking for, then please send a letter by email (up to 1000 words) along with a CV or list of work to talkingbirdscopy@gmail.com

PLEASE ATTACH BOTH YOUR LETTER & CV IN PDF FORMAT TO YOUR E-MAIL WITH SUBJECT: [YourName] General Manager Application.

We will acknowledge receipt of your application within 3 working days.

In your letter, please let us know:

- What interests you most about working with Talking Birds?
- How do your skills and experience match the person specification?
- What particular strengths do you think you will bring to the company?
- Details of two Referees, including a recent employer (whether as staff or freelancer).

Closing date for applications: 3rd March 2025 (10am)

Interviews:

13th March in person at the Nest (either am or pm). If you'd be unable to attend that day, please mention this in your application.

We will share the primary questions we'll be asking with all interviewees in advance of the interview date. As well as a more formal interview, there will be some tasks to undertake to help us evaluate your skills as well as a chance to meet more informally over lunch. We will cover travel and offer a small participation fee to invited interviewees.

Questions about this role

We've tried to take care with the language in this job call out, and to write it in an open, accessible and equitable way – but if anything isn't clear, or you'd like to chat with someone before applying, we're really happy to talk to you. Please email birdmail@talkingbirds.co.uk with your name, details with the best way/time to contact you – and one of us will be in touch. Alternatively leave us a message on 07708 262182

You can find out more about the Nest and [take a video tour here](#).

Our next [monthly co-working afternoon](#) is on Friday 14th February.

You can read [more about our current programme here on our website](#) and we would encourage you to delve in before applying!





Talking Birds

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