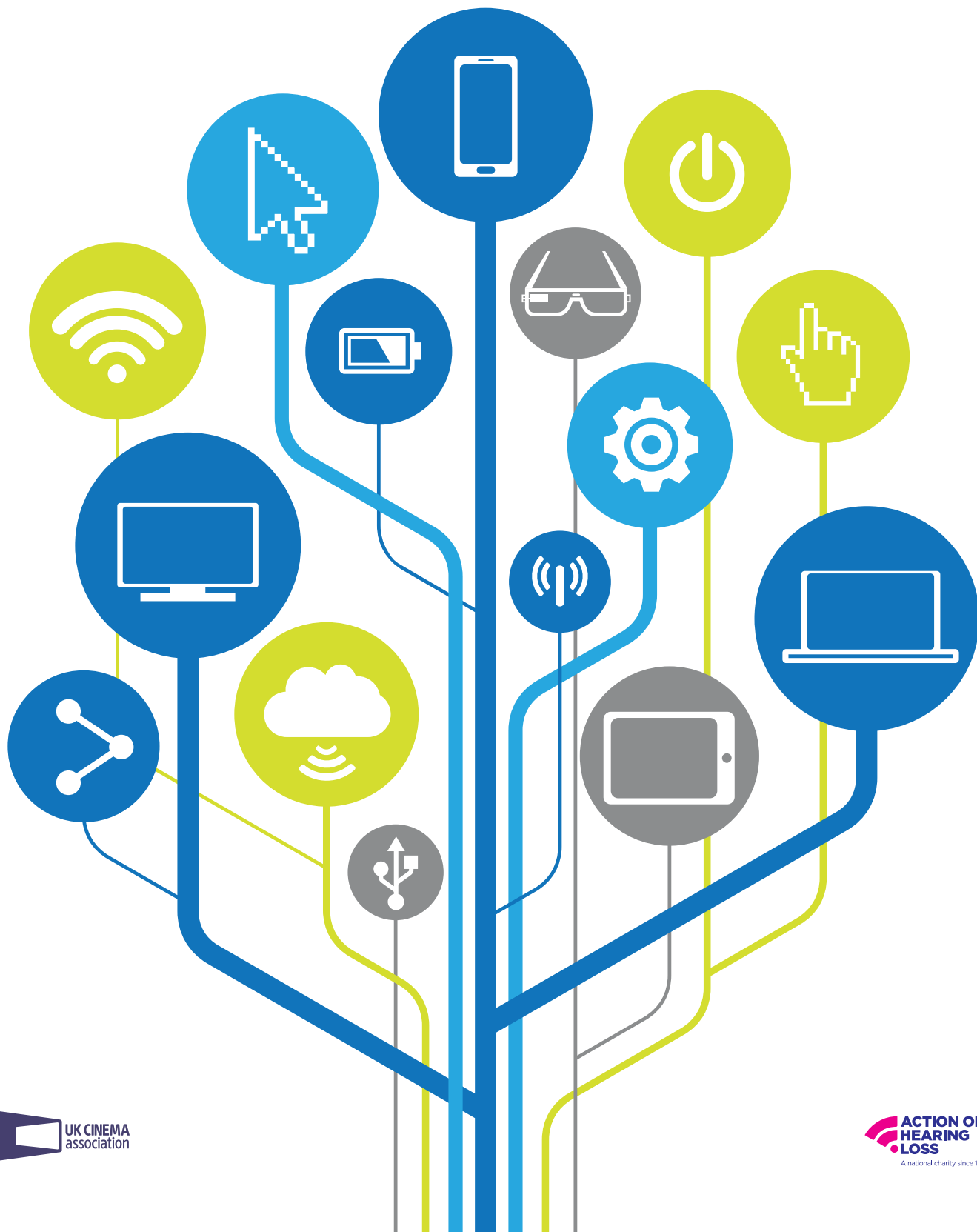


Cinema subtitling in the UK – a new way forward



The problem

The aim of the Technology Challenge Fund is to stimulate innovation in technology that will allow people with hearing loss to have access to an inclusive cinema experience.

The ideal solution must:

- Allow deaf and hearing-impaired people to have an integrated cinema experience with the wider audience;
- Be easy to use for both the cinema and audience member. It must be robust enough to withstand repeated use, and capable of straightforward maintenance and/or be suitable for single use;
- Be financially viable for venues to install and use; the solution cannot be prohibitively expensive;
- Utilise subtitling files that align with current workstreams and are affordable for film distribution companies; and
- Be compatible with existing cinema infrastructure and technology.



The business case

Potential audience reach

170.6m

admissions to UK cinemas
in 2017

57.8%

of adults in the UK visit
the cinema each year

73%

of adult cinema-goers will
visit the cinema at least three
times per annum

14.5%

of the cinema-going audience
are disabled

26m

cinema visits from disabled
customers to UK cinemas
per year

£80-100m

estimated annual spending power
of disabled adults in the UK
– potentially major spenders in
the entertainment sector

1 in 6

16% (11m) of the UK population
have hearing loss

2035

it is estimated that this
will rise to one in five
(15.6m people) by 2035

50,000

children with hearing loss in the
UK. Around half are born with
hearing loss; the other half lose
their hearing during childhood

900,000

people in the UK have severe
or profound hearing loss

40%

of 50+ year olds have
hearing loss

71%

of 70+ year olds will develop
hearing loss

While UK legislation requires that cinemas make what are called 'reasonable adjustments' to enable disabled customers to attend the cinema, it is the application of best practice that underpins all of the work undertaken by the UK Cinema Association and its members in ensuring that the UK sector does all it can to meet the needs of disabled customers.

Given the number of deaf and hearing impaired people in the UK, the Fund's objective is not just about what the law requires, it also makes good business sense.



Market opportunity

- The UK Cinema Association represents over 93 per cent of the UK cinema market, including the three largest cinema chains, ODEON, Cineworld and Vue.
- There are currently over 4,300 cinema screens across 800+ sites that could be enabled with new technology for subtitling.
- The Association has commitment from the three largest UK cinema chains (ODEON, Cineworld and Vue) to trial any viable solutions arising from this process.
- While there is a finite UK market for any new technology created, the challenge being addressed is a Worldwide one. Assistive technology is in use in some international markets, but none of the systems in existence fully meet the criteria set out in our key objectives. The UK Cinema Association has potential routes to European and International markets.
- The development of a viable and inclusive closed captioning solution will not only serve the deaf and hard of hearing community but could easily provide a solution for the provision of foreign language tracks – a vast and currently untapped market.



We are excited to be supporting the UKCA's Technology Challenge Fund and look forward to seeing all of the innovative concepts, which aim to help improve technology solutions for those who are hard of hearing. At ODEON, we are always looking for ways to improve the cinemagoing experience, to ensure it's the best it can be for all our guests. We are proud to be a part of this fantastic initiative and hope it will help to provide a more integrated cinema experience for all." ODEON spokesperson

The Fund



The UK Cinema Association has launched the Technology Challenge Fund in an effort to stimulate and support the development of an inclusive technological solution that will allow people with hearing loss to enjoy a more integrated cinema experience.

In doing so, it wishes to cast the net of potential partners further than just the cinema sector, to involve also those working in the wider technology and academic sectors.

The Association will provide some initial financial incentives for engagement and then – as appropriate – further limited funding for development of promising concepts, all with the hope that support from wider industry partners can be drawn in as the process develops.


The successful applicant will retain their Intellectual Property (IP) rights. Should a suitable and viable product be developed that the cinema sector approves and meets the desired criteria set out in the aims and objectives, Action on Hearing Loss will help to find a suitable commercial partner to develop and create a market ready product.

The UK Cinema Association and Action on Hearing Loss will promote the product through their networks both across the UK and internationally.

Projects that the Fund will not support



In this competition, we are not funding projects that:

- do not support an inclusive cinematic experience;
 - are not viable in financial and/or operational terms;
 - are not robust enough to withstand repeated use, and capable of straightforward maintenance or be suitable for single use; and
 - do not align with or are not compatible with existing infrastructure and mechanisms within the industry to supply the film content.
- 



Eligibility

To lead a project, you can:

- be an organisation of any size; and
- be working alone or in collaboration with others (business, research base, third sector).

Funding and project details

Up to £75,000 is available to support innovative projects in this competition.

This is initially divided across two phases:

- Phase 1 up to £25,000 available (to a limit of £5,000 per project);
- Phase 2 up to £50,000 available (to a limit of £25,000 per project)

Phase 1

In Phase 1, you will be expected to demonstrate the technical feasibility of your proposed innovation. Projects can range in size up to a total cost of £5,000.

Proposals must be completed within eight weeks.

Phase 1 applicants will be invited to a 'development workshop' at which they can refine and discuss their initial ideas with industry experts. Phase 1 proposals will be judged by an independent panel which will be supported by technical peer review.

Phase 2

Phase 2 is only open to applicants that have completed Phase 1 and successfully demonstrated that their concept is technically feasible. In Phase 2, you will develop and test a working prototype in a 'real life' cinema. Projects can range in size up to £25,000 and can last up to six months.

Phase 2 applicants will be given access to a cinema to allow testing during the development of the prototype and will have access to a technical expert to help ensure that the final solution is technically compatible with existing cinema infrastructure.

Phase 2 proposals will be judged by an independent panel.

A showcase event will be held at the end of the process at which successful prototypes will be demonstrated to relevant stakeholders, including people with hearing loss, cinema operators and potential partners able to support the commercialisation and/or adoption of the most promising solution.

Timetable

2018	July – September	Application to express interest to be involved
	October	Launch workshop
	November	Development paper for Phase 1 grant
	December	£5,000 Phase 1 grants awarded

2019	February	Phase 1 closes
	April	£25,000 Phase 2 grants awarded
	September	Phase 2 closes
	November	Showcase event



I love going to the cinema to see the latest films and blockbusters with my friends and family. But as a person with profound deafness, I need subtitles, which are few and far between, to understand what is happening. This means a lot of planning is involved with my friends and family to have an inclusive experience. If there was a possibility of a easy to use technological solution in cinemas across the UK, I would be able to go to any screening I want, when I want and have a cracking good time with my friends and family whilst leading the independent life I want to choose.” Deaf cinema-goer

Expert panel

In order to help in the sifting of applications and identification of the most promising proposals, the UK Cinema Association has assembled an expert panel. The panel will offer input at every stage of the process.

The panel comprises a range of experienced professionals from across the wider cinema sector – exhibition, distribution, technical, access specialists as well as representatives from the British Film Institute (BFI) and people with hearing loss.

The panel will help guide and provide input at every stage of the Fund to ensure that the chosen solution meets the following criteria, specifically that it:

- allows people who are deaf or have some hearing loss to enjoy an integrated cinema experience with the wider audience;
- is straightforward to use for both the cinema and audience member;
- is financially viable for cinemas to purchase and install; and
- is or can be made compatible with existing cinema technology.

Meet the panel

Ed Rex	Patron	Action On Hearing Loss (AOHL)
Ben Luxford	Head of UK Audiences	British Film Institute (BFI)
Jerry Murdoch	Country Manager UK & Ireland	Cinema Next
Rick Williams	Access Specialist	Freeney Williams
Stephane Zamparo	Subtitling Manager	Motion Picture Solutions (MPS)
Mark Barlow	General Manager UK Theatres	NATL Amusements (UK) Ltd
Calum Corser	Central Operations Support	ODEON Cinemas
Leah Byrne	Audience Development Manager	Picturehouse Cinemas
Paul Willmott	Technical Director	Saffron Screen
Gráinne Peat	Policy Executive	UK Cinema Association
Demir Yavuz	Head of Technical Operations	Universal Pictures

Background

Subtitled screenings in UK Cinemas

All cinemas aim to provide an immersive big screen experience, where the audience is encouraged to feel part of the action. A large part of this relies on their engagement with state-of-the-art audio-visual effects, something which it is recognised is difficult for those with sensory impairments.

In its efforts to ensure that cinema continues to be as accessible as possible, the sector has developed a number of approaches intended to aid those with hearing problems in particular.

Chief amongst these has been the provision of subtitles, providing a solution for people with partial hearing loss as well as those who are profoundly deaf.

Subtitled/captioned screenings provide a transcription of the audio from a film, displayed at the bottom of the cinema screen. Along with the dialogue from the film, the subtitles include non-dialogue audio such as “(sighs)” or “(door creaks)”.

1,500

subtitled screenings each week around the UK in over 500 cinema sites – a 120 per cent increase in the last decade

160

kids clubs featuring subtitled screenings that take place monthly

60%

UK cinemas now provide regular subtitled screenings

Top 20

films of 2017 were provided with subtitles*

All

major US studios supply all of their films with subtitle tracks from release date

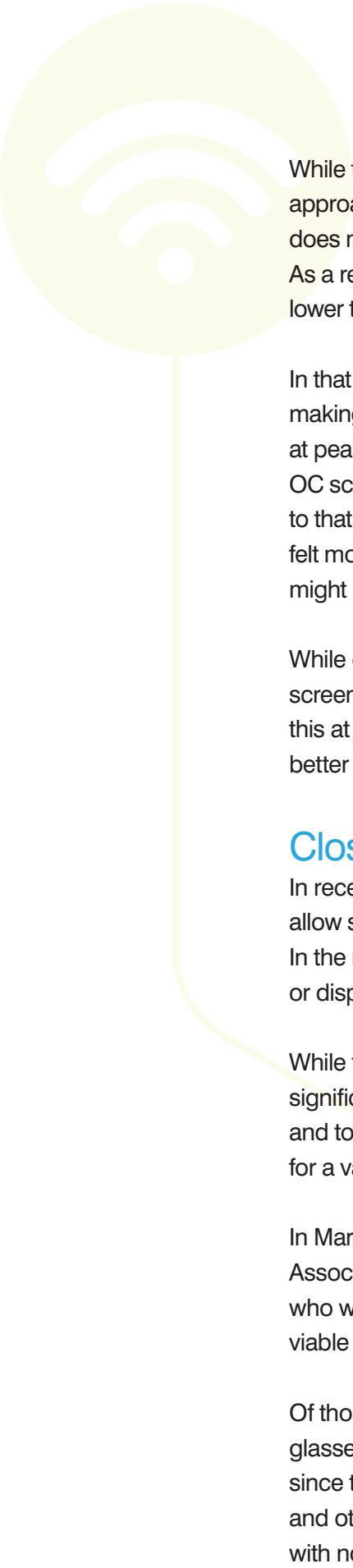
DVD

releases always contain the subtitle track

* That said, the majority of (smaller) distribution companies do not include a subtitle track for the cinema-release.

You can search and book tickets for subtitled screenings on:

www.accessiblescreeningsuk.co.uk



While this progress has been very positive, there remain challenges around the current approach. The general experience of UK cinema operators is that the broader audience does not wish to attend subtitled screenings, and will avoid these if given the choice. As a result, attendances at open captioned (OC) screenings are typically significantly lower than those of the same film at the same time, albeit in non-captioned form.

In that cinema operators therefore risk foregoing a significant amount of income in making OC screenings available, these are in general programmed sparingly, and rarely at peak viewing times. As a result, there are fewer and less conveniently-programmed OC screenings than customers who are deaf or have hearing loss would like. Related to that, when there are occasional technical failures of subtitling equipment, these are felt more keenly by audience members with hearing loss, for whom that screening might be their only opportunity that week to enjoy an accessible cinema visit.

While efforts have been made to increase uptake of the current number of OC screenings, the growth in these has undoubtedly begun to plateau in recent years, this at a time when expectations amongst customers with hearing loss regarding better provision have understandably continued to increase.

Closed captions

In recent years, a number of new products have emerged onto the market which allow subtitling text to be seen on a personal device not visible to the wider audience. In the main these have involved technology where the text is seen on a personal screen or displayed across the lenses of glasses worn by the viewer.

While these 'closed' caption (CC) devices, if widely adopted, have the potential significantly to increase access to the cinema for customers who need subtitling, and to allow for a more integrated audience experience, no one solution has yet – for a variety of reasons – achieved widespread take-up by cinema operators.

In March 2013, in partnership with a variety of industry partners, the UK Cinema Association organised a test day, whereby a specially-invited audience of people who were deaf or had hearing loss were invited to try out the (then) seemingly most viable devices in a 'real life' cinema environment.

Of those systems tested, while none were seen to be perfect, devices based around glasses were clearly preferred by the majority of those involved in the test. However, since that time – and despite some limited roll-outs of these technologies in the US and other territories – progress towards an acceptable CC solution has been slow, with no viable and widely-accepted solution having yet emerged.

How to apply

The Fund is now taking expressions of interest to attend the launch workshop which will take place on Wednesday 10 October at a Central London cinema.

To apply, please download and complete the application form which can be found at <https://www.cinemauk.org.uk/tcf-apply/>

Closing date for applications is **Friday 28 September 2018**.

This Fund is open to all individuals/companies to apply. There are no restrictions on Entrants being UK based but there is a requirement to attend the launch workshop and further events depending on how far along the process entrants go.

Entrants will be fully expected to cover their travel and associated costs, there is no travel bursary or financial assistance available from this Fund to attend these events.

Please return completed forms to the UK Cinema Association at: info@cinemauk.org.uk

Should you have any questions relating to the Fund or your application, please email: **Gráinne Peat**, at the UK Cinema Association at grainne.peat@cinemauk.org.uk

About us



The UK Cinema Association

The UK Cinema Association represents and acts on behalf of UK cinema operators. This includes lobbying and working with Government at all levels, with other sectors of the film industry, particularly distribution, as well as working with others to promote the value of cinema to the wider public.

The UK cinema sector is recognised as a World-leader in its efforts to meet the needs of disabled customers, it has already achieved a great deal in ensuring that cinemas are a welcoming and accessible environment for people with disabilities.

The Association and its members continue to discuss and develop approaches around disability and access. These considerations are informed by the UK Cinema Association's Disability Working Group, which comprises representatives from the key cinema circuits and equipment manufacturers as well as those groups representing people with disabilities, such as Action on Hearing Loss, RNIB, The National Autistic Society and Muscular Dystrophy.

Website: www.cinemauk.org.uk

Twitter: [@cinema_uk](https://twitter.com/cinema_uk)

Contact: info@cinemauk.org.uk



Action on Hearing Loss

Action on Hearing is the UK's national charity helping people who are confronting life-changing deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss. Currently, 11 million people in the UK have hearing loss which is one in six people and this is estimated to go up to 15.6 million (one in five) people by 2035.

Hearing loss, even when managed with devices, can result in a number of difficulties preventing people from being able to live independently and being able to equally and inclusively access services and entertainment. Action on Hearing continues to deliver and improve vital services through research and funding so that people with hearing loss can live the life they choose – at home, at work and when they're out and about.

Website: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Twitter: [@ActionOnHearing](https://twitter.com/ActionOnHearing)

Contact: technology@hearingloss.org.uk