

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	7:84 Theatre Company (Scotland) Ltd	
Application Reference number:	G2001001042	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£139,997	£146296
Officer's recommendation		
<p>Summarise the key points of your assessment and draw out the strengths and weaknesses of the application taken together with any comments you have received from source evidence (portfolio of evidence/ internal / external consultation). Highlight any specific risks <i>Note: The amount of information you provide here should be sufficient for the decision maker to reach a decision. As with all previous commentary boxes please do not exceed 250 words</i></p>		
<p>Comments: This application is strong in terms of public engagement and each strand has been well thought through in terms of design and project partners. 7:84 has an impressive range of partners and the proposal is strongly focused on giving people opportunity to make theatre, especially those who have been excluded and have not experienced theatre before. The project includes work for children and young people and projects will involve non-traditional theatre spaces however it is not clear how innovative it will be in its approach. There are other companies who deliver projects in non-theatre settings and work with children and young people at risk of being excluded. The company plans to work in communities throughout Scotland and has links with a number of local authorities. I am not sure to what extent 7:84 has looked at other proposed theatre for communities in each area (e.g. in Ayrshire) The artistic leadership focus of the proposal is less well argued and I am unclear as to how this is demonstrated. Whilst the proposal refers to mentoring RSAMD students there does not seem any further demonstration of how artists will be supported to fulfil their potential (over and above that of creating work). Monitoring and self evaluation seems to focus principally on the public engagement of 7:84's work rather than wider artistic quality and the application does not consider how work will be evaluated by peers nor how the Board will review work. I have concerns as to the sustainability of this project. Given the wide range of partners being attracted, if successful 7:84 would presumably want to ensure the work could continue. There is little to demonstrate how this would be addressed. A marketing plan for the overall programme – targeting future partners and funders could have helped address this. Whilst the focus of the application is strong in terms of public engagement and demonstrates a coherent development for 7:84, I do not think it demonstrates a unique approach in terms of artistic leadership and given the potential risks I would suggest it is a low priority for support.</p>		
Officer's overall priority recommendation		LOW
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 30 January 2008 Revised: 20 March 2008
Print name:	Gillian Shaw	

Note: Lead officer to complete the monitoring information for GMS at the end of this template before passing to Manager for assessment ratification

Stage 2: Heads of Departments prioritise applications with advice from Specialist Advisors

1. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the application identified by the Specialist Advisors? Please summarise their comments below. What were their ratings of the importance of the application in being supported?

Comments:

Attendees:

David Taylor, Co-Director of Arts

Specialist Advisors: Stewart Ennis, Tim Licata, David Leddy, Alex Patience, Sandy Maxwell, Stephen Slater, Stephen Stenning and Laura Tyrrell

The Panel identified the following strengths and weaknesses of 7:84:

The application did not appear to grow out of the company's previous production activity. Quality of engagement was good, but there was little in the way of professional theatre production in the application. The artistic programme sounded bland and the topics mentioned did not seem appropriate to target groups. The SAs doubted if generic topics such as 'regeneration' would appeal to young people. There was an apparent reduction in artistic ambition. The application was for an arts education organisation as opposed to being an arts-led organisation.

Geographical areas covered were limited to 4 regions – 2 per year, and partnerships were limited in number and scope. There was a perceived lack of artistic partnerships as opposed to non-artistic partnerships.

SA overall rating: Low

2. Summarise the role of the organisation within the infrastructure of the sector. Assess to what extent the organisation's vision will contribute to the department's and to Scottish Arts Council's aims: (to fulfil artists' potential, to increase participation, to place creativity at the heart of learning)

Comments:

7:84 is a long established touring theatre company in Scotland. Founded in 1973, as a political touring theatre, the company is very well known. The organisation received core funding from Scottish Arts Council Drama Department until 2005/06 (£232,574). In 2006/07 the company received £152,337 towards the productions of Re:Union and The Algebra of Freedom. In 2006 7:84 stopped being one of our core funded organisations and since then the company has adjusted the focus of its work. It now focuses on involving communities in creating work which addresses social issues rather than producing professional theatre for touring to audiences.

Since 2005 the company has worked on a wide range of projects involving non-arts partners and in partnership with different interest groups.

1. *Fit with FXO criteria:*

1.1 *Excellent artistic vision and leadership; role within sector/support to artists:*

The assessment of this application does not point to the organisation being a leader in drama or demonstrating excellence in its artistic vision. There is a measure of support to artists in that there are two events per year benefitting twenty artists planned; this is not a significant contribution to the development of artists.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public

The application is largely focused on engaging with participants and the proposals would increase opportunities for participation in the arts: 5,500+ attendances and 12,500+ participants per annum are indicated. These are significant levels of engagement. However the SAs indicated some concerns about the appropriateness of the “topic based” nature of the participatory events which were not considered necessarily appropriate to young peoples’ interests.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management

Acceptable – appropriate rates of pay are proposed. The proposals are assessed as medium risk by the FCO. There is a lack of detail as to how the company’s success would be measured and monitored.

1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access

There is a commitment to widening access and the proposals target disadvantaged groups.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%

Indicated as achievable.

2. Fit with Departmental priorities

Some link with creating theatre for children in that the target group includes, particularly, young people and includes work within the mainstream school system.

3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims

There is not significant evidence that the application would make a major contribution to allowing artists to fulfil their potential, insofar as the proposals appear to be focussed on the process and benefits to participants. The development of artists is not significant. The proposals to increase the numbers of participants are strong.

- 3.** Based on the lead officer’s assessment and the subsequent meeting with Specialist advisors, please rate the application (High, medium, low) summarise your reasons for assessing the application as you have (drawing out the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and highlighting any specific risks)

Comments

1.1 Application rating

Low

a. comparison with Officer and Specialist advisor comments and recommendations:

Both the officer and SAs recommended as low priority. The application focuses primarily on activity that will increase participation in the arts. The officer’s assessment and the SAs comments both reflect a concern about there being a lack of artistic focus in the proposals. The artistic proposals have not stimulated reviewers and therefore have not gained support. I concur that the proposals are interesting, but err on the side of being rather routine rather than exemplary in artistic terms.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating

Lack of compelling artistic vision and high achievement in past artistic outputs. However, I recognise the levels of numbers of people who would be engaged and this leads me to rate it as low priority for support.

1.3 Strengths of application

I think that the applicant has the potential to make a significant contribution to increasing participation and that there would be a reasonable spread of activity across the country.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications`

Lack of compelling artistic vision and lack of strong artistic track record.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application

Some risk associated with fundraising targets and the plans for achieving these.

1.6 Development areas identified

N/A.

1.7 Recommended level of support

Not recommended for support.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

The spread of activity is likely to be reasonable. The applicant has indicated that the activity will happen across the whole of Scotland but this is probably unrealistic over a two year period given the activity described. Nevertheless I think that the geographical areas to be covered are reasonable.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation

LOW

Head of Department's signature:

Print name:

David Taylor

Date: 15 February 2008
Revised: 26 March 2008

Stage 3: Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) make recommendations to Directors (Acting Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive and Co-Directors of Arts)		
1. Summarise the reasons why the final rating has been made.		
Comments: Weak overall fit with FXO criteria in the context of a highly competitive funding round. Not recommended for support.		
Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation		LOW
Chair of Meeting signature:		Date: 2 April 2008
Print name:	Iain Munro	

Stage 4: Directors make recommendations to Joint Board (strategic fit)		
Record the Directors' recommendation and confirm the suggested level of support. If the recommendation differs from Stage 3, please summarise the reasons why.		
Comments: Agree with Stage 3 recommendation.		
Directors recommendations to Joint Board		LOW
Acting Chief Executive signature:	Jim Tough	Date: 10 April 2008

Stage 5: Joint Board's decisions		
Record the Joint Board's recommendation. If the recommendation differs from Stage 4, please summarise the reasons why.		
Comments: The Joint Board accepts the Stage 3 recommendation.		
Joint Board Final Decision		REFUSE
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	£

End of Assessment