

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Artlink Central Ltd	
Application Reference number:	G201001013	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£70000	£70000
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: Artlink Central is working in the still young and developmental field of arts and health in Scotland and has been supported in this work by both Equalities and Visual Arts Department at SAC and is currently in receipt of Flexible Funding. The organisation is dedicated to developing inclusive arts activity across Central Scotland by giving vulnerable groups access to high quality arts projects.</p> <p>They are one of a small number of organisations working in this field in Scotland and their plans for 2009-11 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliver an innovative and exciting arts programme for vulnerable people in Forth Valley • enable the Director's position to become full-time • employ a part-time Artspace co-ordinator <p>They also aim to continue evaluation of arts in prison work in partnership with restorative practices programme at HMI Cornton Vale which they sight as a model of best practice. Eight residencies will be delivered a year, giving inmates the opportunity to engage in a wide range of media.</p> <p>The artistic vision of the company looks interesting and fits well with its priorities. The artistic collaborators which the company proposes to work with have good reputations and track records. Artlink has developed some good partnerships in Scotland and plan to further develop their partnerships with local authorities.</p> <p>Artlink Central have submitted a well structured arts programme, the development of the training and support to artists program and the development of the relationship with the national companies across artforms should support Artlink's vision of delivering arts programs of a high standard to vulnerable and marginalised groups.</p> <p>The application does point to the organisation aspiring to be a leader in arts and disability and excellence in its artistic vision, however there is a lack of detail to evidence this. There is a measure of support to artists, and a contribution to development of artists through the training programmes. The application is largely focused on engaging with participants and the proposals would increase opportunities for participation in the arts. The proposals are assessed as medium risk by Financial Compliance Officer. The budgets supplied indicate that the majority of Scottish Arts Council funds would be incorporated into payroll. There is a commitment to widening access and the proposals target disadvantaged groups. The marketing plan and concepts of evaluation are clearly outlined.</p> <p>The organisation outline an extensive programme, they will need to work within there capacity and not become over-stretched, in terms of staffing and programme management.</p>		

Artlink Central has a clear mission statement and vision of its aims and values regarding the promotion of developing as a key organisation in arts and disability in the Forth Valley. There is however a lack of detail in the financial information supplied, the budget information relating to the directors position becoming full-time and the part-time Artspace co-ordinator and how this fits with the overall amount applied for is unclear. A concern is that the organisation works within its capacity and does not become over-stretched. With increasing demand for Artlink Central's programme careful attention to quality of programme and strong and effective management would be required.

Officer's overall priority recommendation		MEDIUM
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 6 February 2008 Revised: 20 March 2008
Print name:	ROBBIE MCGHEE	

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:

The Specialist Advisors panel that considered this application included Kirsteen Macdonald, Susan Nickalls, Sita Ramamurthy, Louise Butler, Steve Slater, Alan Riach, Wendy Niblock and Sally Wilson. The panel commented:

They recognised that participants are benefiting from **Artlink Central's** work and appreciated the benefits of its presence. They felt that there was a lack of clarity about the vision driving the artistic practice, or how artistic practice was being challenged through the social focus of the organisation's work. It was felt that Artlink Central could be more proactive in 'upping the game' for both participants and artists. There was a sense that the organisation could find itself losing sight of its mission by trying to meet the agendas of different funders and other stakeholders. There is little significant evidence of new or innovative partnerships, and the arts did not always seem to be central. The panel recognised that the organisation does important work in a geographical area not well served by this particular type of activity. It also recognised that there are development needs and that these are acknowledged within the application. It is strong locally but needs to build its infrastructure in a strategic way. The panel was surprised by the lack of Scotland-wide partnership working.

The panel rated this application as low priority for support.

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:

Artlink Central work is in the field of arts, health and disability. It was previously core funded and since April 2007 has been in receipt of flexible funding. The organisation is dedicated to developing inclusive arts activity across Central Scotland by creating opportunities to vulnerable groups to participate in projects across a range of artforms.

1. Fit with FXO criteria:

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

Artlink Central has not sufficiently demonstrated excellent artistic vision and leadership through the application and the proposed plan of work.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public:

The organisation demonstrates engagement with the public, providing opportunities for a sector of the community often marginalised from arts activity.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management:

Artlink Central is a limited company with charitable status. The Business Plan clearly outlines the structure, governance and management of the organisation.

1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access:

Artlink Central submitted Equal Opportunities and Diversity policies with the application. These policies focus on recruitment. The work of the organisation is however centred on providing opportunities for excluded and vulnerable groups of people to access arts opportunities.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%:

Artlink Central has met the matched funding requirement.

2. Fit with Departmental priorities:

The proposed programme expands across artforms but has not clearly demonstrated the Cross Art form priority for the development of collaborative working and artistic practice which crosses artform boundaries.

3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims:

Artlink Central contributes significantly to the Scottish Arts Council's Aim 2: 'to increase participation in the arts' and to a lesser extent Aims 1 and 3.

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:

In the context of the flexible funding criteria and competitive funding, I concur with the Specialist Advisors panel and rate this application as **low** priority for support.

The Assessing Officer recognises Artlink Central as a key organisation for arts and disability within the Forth Valley area and notes a well structured plan of work within the application which includes training and support to artists and a range of artistic collaborators.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating:

While recognising the value work of Artlink Central for its participants, the Specialist Advisor panel raised concerns of clarity of artistic vision driving the work to ensure that the organisation positions itself at the forefront of this area of practice. I concur with these comments and do not feel that the organisation has demonstrated it has met the criteria for excellence in artistic vision and a leadership role.

1.3 Strengths of application:

- Meets the criteria of public engagement and widening access to the arts

- Provides valuable opportunities for vulnerable groups to access the arts in Clackmannanshire and the Forth valley area and there is a demand for activity.
- Plan of work includes training and support for artists.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications:

- artistic vision lacks clarity and does not appear to be driving the organisation's work
- concerns regarding lack of detail in the financial planning underpinning the application and business plan.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application:

The application describes the need to expand its staffing capacity but the financial implications of this are unclear within the budgets and the funding applied for.

1.6 Development areas identified:

The importance of visionary and effective arts organisations working within health and disability are integral to ensuring wide access to the arts, it is imperative that innovative practice and strong artistic vision is driving such organisations. The lack of this demonstrated within the application is the most significant area of development for Artlink Central.

1.7 Recommended level of support:

In the context of the flexible funding criteria and competitive funding, I have rate this application as a low priority for support.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place?

Artlink Central is based in Stirling and its programme of activity takes place here and in the neighbouring local authority areas of Falkirk and Clackmannanshire.

1.2 Where will the audience come from?

Participants are drawn from the areas where activities are based.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation		LOW
Head of Department's signature:		Date: 13 February 2008 Revised: 26 March 2008
Print name:	Anita Clark	

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:		Date: 10 April 2008
Print name:	Jim Tough	

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 4 recommendation.		
Joint Board Final Decision		REFUSE
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	£

End of Assessment