

## FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

<b>Applicant name:</b>	Assembly Direct Limited	
<b>Application Reference number:</b>	G201001066	
<b>Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)</b>	£210,000	£216,300

<b>Officer's recommendation</b>
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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  
*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*

**Comments:**

Assembly Direct have a good track record with regard to the artistic quality of their work.

The proposed programme offers some interesting developments and some novel ideas – however there is not enough detail to back up these ideas.

AD have enjoyed success with their various festivals.

There have been a number of ongoing issues with regard to governance and it is not clear that the new system proposed will ensure the best governance and management systems.

Overall there is a huge lack of detail especially with regard to financial information and detailed budgets, which has made it very difficult to assess many parts of this application.

Because of the lack of detail in the application I have to recommend a LOW priority

<b>Officer's overall priority recommendation</b>	<b>LOW</b>
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Lead Officer signature:		Date: 27 January 2008 Revised 20 March 2008
Print name:	Stuart Thomas	

## 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?

The panel consisted of Murray Buchanan, Paul Bream, Jim Gaitens, Rachel Nelken and Susan Nickalls, with ratings received from Marie Fielding by email.

### Comments:

- The panel felt this was generally not a strong application, and not enough detail had been provided.
- The panel sought clarification that industry standard fees would always be paid to musicians engaged by Assembly Direct without which the application would be deemed ineligible.
- The panel found that, although there seemed to be a genuine intention in Assembly Direct to broaden its audience, there was no detail of how they would do this. Audience figures were anticipated by the organisation to increase from 13,000 to 17,000 during the funded period, but how this would happen was not outlined in a marketing strategy. Little information was provided about how Assembly Direct would go about engaging audiences, particularly young people, and they appeared to demonstrate no knowledge of their current audiences, with little evidence of monitoring and/or accountability provided in this regard.
- The panel felt that Assembly Direct needed to better consider how to present jazz to its audiences, and that there was conservatism and a lack of imagination in the promoter's programming. The panel identified that no success stories or specific jazz artists were mentioned in the application as evidence of Assembly Direct's successes.
- The panel felt that Assembly Direct were doing a reasonable job in respect of the jazz festivals they promoted, but raised concerns about the impact of the rest of their programme of one-off gigs on the Scottish jazz scene. Although there was mention in the application of establishing a promoters forum, this was not backed up sufficiently, whereas the evidence provided seemed to show the organisation's focus being more on the festivals.
- The panel identified a risk to the sector in terms of investment and support as per the music department's stated priorities for sector forum development.

The panel rated the importance of the application in being supported as **Low to Medium**.

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:**

Assembly Direct (AD) has been the lead promoter for jazz in Scotland for some considerable time and for much of that time received core funding. AD lost their core funding and became a project funded organisation but significantly contributed to the setting up of the jazz development fund and the Scottish Jazz Federation, part of our sector forum priority for the department. The core activity of AD was festival led, but their programming of a series of jazz concerts, particularly in Edinburgh was also key as was the recent international exchange programme with Sweden. AD have been a strategically important organisation/promoter for the music department, but issues surrounding their governance was the major reason that core funding ended.

Their principle strategic value is therefore within their chosen sector but AD does not fully engage with all of the Scottish Arts Council's stated priorities.

**1. Fit with FXO criteria:** In part.

**1.1 Excellent artistic vision and leadership; role within sector/support to artists:** AD have certainly played a key role in the development of jazz in Scotland, at every level.

**1.2 Improving your engagement with the public:** AD also plays an important role in promoting jazz festivals in Scotland and programming jazz series in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

**1.3 Good practice in the governance and management:** An area of ongoing concern as evidenced.

**1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access:** Not as proactive in this regard as we would have liked.

**1.5 Raising other income at least 25%:** Probably, but difficult to tell from the lack of budgetary detail included.

**2. Fit with Departmental priorities:** Sector forum development, yes.

**3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims:** Aim 1.

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:**

There is no doubt that AD is an important organisation for the promotion of jazz throughout Scotland. There is also no doubt that, based on the assessing officer's (Stuart Thomas) and Specialist Adviser's comments that there are basic problems identified with their governance, budget and ability to programme really innovative work. There were also questions raised on the efficacy of the proposed audience development initiative using audience members as the steering group. AD also need to play an active role in the Scottish Jazz Federation, as both organisations are important to develop the jazz sector fully, as per stated departmental priorities.

The appointment of a General Manager which may lead to more time being available to the two executive directors may help but we would be keen to see how a completely new structure for the administration of AD would work and what it would cost. I have no doubt that AD can compete in the commercial market place, as they have proven they are able to do so in the past but again, budgetary information is not as detailed as it might be.

I find myself in a dilemma between prioritising investment for the jazz sector as a whole, which is critically important as evidenced by the recent success of the TSYJO in Canada, but I must also fairly evaluate this application which I can only rate as medium for the strategic importance of this investment in the sector but no higher, as per the comments of the Specialist Adviser's panel who rated it low to medium. Their application for £210K and £216.3 would take their expectations back to core funding levels and we have already argued that these could not be sustained by this organisation. I fear a low rating will lose the investment to the sector and rate medium for the consideration of the directors, who must take these comments into consideration.

**1.1 Application rating: Medium.**

The assessing officer rated this application as low. The Specialist Advisor's rating was low/medium. My concern is two-fold, one for the organisation, but much more importantly for essential investment represented here in jazz, which we must not lose.

**1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating:** My reasons for the rating are outlined clearly and relate to governance, finance and the ability of this organisation to fully embrace what it must do to satisfy all criteria associated with public funding and provide clear and detailed budgets.

**1.3 Strengths of application:** The role AD plays in the sector and its development.

**1.4 Weaknesses of application:** As already outlined with the lack of detailed budgetary advice.

**1.5 Specific risks associated with the application:** As above.

**1.6 Development areas identified:** Governance and closer engagement with all areas of the sector.

**1.7 Recommended level of support:** I would wish to maintain their core festival activities, which is at the level of £70K. In addition, their Edinburgh/Glasgow series would be covered by £80K. The priority for support remains with the sector, however. Maximum: £150K both years.

**4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme**

**Comments:**

**1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place?** As stated, the festival activity is geographically diverse and AD engage with 19 of Scotland's 32 local authorities. Festivals occur in Islay, Edinburgh, Dundee and Lockerbie. The jazz series take place in Edinburgh and Glasgow, primarily.

**1.2 Where will the audience come from?** Festivals (more transient) and the two city series tend to be more localised.

<b>Head of Department's overall priority recommendation</b>		<b>MEDIUM</b>
<b>Head of Department's signature:</b>		<b>Date: 15 February 2008 Revised 26 March 2008</b>
<b>Print name:</b>	<b>Ian Smith</b>	

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

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

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

**End of Assessment**