

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Communicado Productions	
Application Reference number:	G201001059	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£192,605	£272,398

Officer's recommendation

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

The ideas behind this proposal are interesting and driven by a strong artistic vision and have a good fit to the flexible funding criteria for work that is artistically driven. Key artists involved have very good reputations for provision of high calibre work.

The 09-11 programme of work for presentation and plans for education/outreach demonstrate a strong commitment to improving engagement with the public (including disabled people, people from ethnic minority communities and Gaelic speakers) however the application lacks sufficient detail to ascertain its viability in terms of delivery and audience development. In that respect the proposal is limited in fitting the criteria for flexible funding (maximising audience attendance). It is positive to see the potential for CP's work to reach the student market through its curricular relevance however there is no clear detail on how this will be achieved. Once piece for young audiences is included which fits with the drama department's stated priority for work for children (to a limited degree).

The application does not demonstrate good business/financial practice and experience in delivering the aims and objectives outlined. This is due partly to an under developed business plan. Additionally, the budgets submitted do not demonstrate project viability or experience of financial management.

The lead officer believes CP has a lot to offer the Scottish public in terms of accessible, quality based (inspiring) opportunities as well as meaningful arts/educational experiences. However, this application does not clearly demonstrate how CP's plans can be realistically achieved. If funded, she would recommend that the award is based on ensuring that the company puts in place relevant developmental opportunities.

Taking everything into account the lead officer would view this proposal a Medium Priority for support.

Officer's overall priority recommendation		MEDIUM
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 31 January 2008 Revised: 20 March 2008
Print name:	Angela Hogg	

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 Comunicado:

It was felt that this was a poor quality application –the thrust of the application stressed the Comunicado brand and history rather than about new projects and outcomes. However, the artistic programme as indicated, sounds exciting and productions sound very interesting, the company has produced high quality work in the past and is associated with exciting work even after 25 years. This was an interesting robust proposal for interesting ideas, and it was felt that a re-kindled ambition was evident.

Some felt that the tone of the application was over-stated and that the applicant had not taken the trouble to make the case for funding fully.

The audience development approach was weak with little reference to who the intended audience was or what the marketing approach would be.

There was concern about whether they would have the structure to realise their plans. The volume of work was thought to be high within the time frame, but it was acknowledged that some of the projects had been in development for some time.

Specialist Advisors overall rating: 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:

Comunicado Productions (CP) (formed 2001) arises from Comunicado (Theatre Company) a well established organisation formed 25 years ago. Following a period of transition it is once again under the leadership of Artistic Director Gerry Mulgrew (a key artistic figure in the Scottish Theatre Community). CP prioritises risk taking and the production of *provocative* theatre which is also accessible to wide ranging audiences. The company sees itself as a *living ensemble* of artists who work with the company regularly. CP is keen to work with emerging artists as well as established artists as part of their vision to offer the public (and artists) exciting, adventurous and relevant work which usually involves visual, physical, musical and text forms.

1. *Fit with FXO criteria:*

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

The artistic vision and leadership is rated as high and there is evidence of the proposal being likely to provide support to artists.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public

The projected attendances are high (10,500 and 19,300 in the two years) but there is little in the way of specific audience development plans to underpin these projections.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management

The Assessing Officer and Financial compliance Officer have identified significant issues relating to budgeting which indicate weaknesses in financial management. There are no details of the Board membership, structure or skills profile.

1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access

There is little detail of how equal opportunities will be addressed in practical terms. However the programme elements include artists with BME backgrounds and themes that reflect racial issues. There is also a plan to work with Sound of Progress- company that works with disabled artists.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%

Met.

2. Fit with Departmental priorities

No particular fit.

3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims

The application would meet the aim of developing artists' potential and increasing participation. Since 2005 they have received 2 flexible project awards through the drama department's open funds for touring. The applicant is likely to meet the need for high quality work that tours widely, providing suitable product for venues across the country. The number of attendances, if achieved would be significant and therefore would make a real contribution to increasing participation.

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

a. comparison with Officer and Specialist advisor comments and recommendations

Both the Specialist Advisors and the Assessing Officer rate the application as medium and I concur. The SAs were critical of the application as such, but were very positive about the company's track record and potential. In short the application is strong on artistic elements but high risk from a business point of view.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating

As above

1.3 Strengths of application

The ideas and artistic personnel are strong. Communicado has a long pedigree for producing innovative and energetic work.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications

Governance and finance are weak. The application and business plan are light and raise fears that the organisation may not be able to deliver what it promises. The application reveals a lack of administrative ability most marked in the poor budgeting.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application

High risk related to financial planning given errors within the budget. Also risk that the management structure is not adequate to the task.

1.6 Development areas identified

Equalities plan, financial planning, audience development and marketing, and operational management.

1.7 Recommended level of support

The assessing officer recognized the company's artistic strength and potential but poor business and financial planning has led to a "medium" overall rating by the officer.

I recommend a medium priority as any award would require a new business plan. Secondly the level of grant requested is excessive.

Amount recommended: £200,000 per annum.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

Difficult to comment as no detail provided beyond "throughout Scotland". I would have expected touring company (as opposed to a national or regional venue or agency) to provide more information re their intended geographic spread.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation

MEDIUM

Head of Department's signature:

Print name:

David Taylor

Date: 25 March 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: Good overall fit with FXO criteria to merit strong medium priority but relatively lower in comparison to other applications because of the issues identified in the assessment. In a very competitive funding environment with limited funds available, it is not possible to support all strong medium rated applications. Therefore, not recommended for support.		
Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation		Strong medium
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		Strong medium
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