

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Cumbernauld Theatre Trust Limited	
Application Reference number:	G201001029	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£150,000	£150,000
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</p> <p><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>		
Comments:		
<p>Strength</p> <p>One of the key pictures emerging from both the business plan and the application is that of an organisation that is clearly in transition, which I presume was informed by its relatively recent history of bad operational returns. However, the new vision and plan have incorporated strong elements of awareness that the social and artistic circumstances are changing rapidly and that a building based organisation needed to respond as quickly. Nonetheless, the transition plan, while visionary and occasionally daring, is still within the existing parameters of being a producer and facilitator of artistic endeavours. The uniqueness of the application is the promise of transforming Cumbernauld Theatre's facilities into a significant infrastructure for both professional and practice development.</p> <p>Although drama is still regarded as the primary art form of the organisation, the artistic and the business models being put in place seek to make the venue into a cultural resource and a catalyst for new developments in performing arts generally. Emphasis will be largely on multidisciplinary and multi-genre work within the performing arts ecology. This kind of structural retooling implies that productions/programming at Cumbernauld Theatre will henceforth become a different kind of social and aesthetic event. Within this framework, the traditional separation of audience and performers/venue becomes dissolved, with the two becoming one entity.</p> <p>What is being proposed is a significant undertaking, which in the light of the 21st century expansion in the aesthetics of performing arts, including theatre, is worth supporting.</p>		
<p>Risk</p> <p>A significant weakness of the proposal which I believe can be addressed easily if the application was successful is that it may be imposing more roles than is necessary on the organisation. An example here is the proposal to create a touring development agency. The question that arises is what will be the purpose of such an agency that is not being fulfilled at the moment or may not be fulfilled within the existing infrastructure? What capacity and resources are available or will be available to support such an agency? And what are the long term financial imperatives of such a work within an organisation that itself relies on substantial investment from the Scottish Arts Council and its parent local authority?</p> <p>Another weakness of the proposal is that there is no clear separate costing of programme as such, as the budget presented is largely holistic. It is therefore difficult to highlight which has the minimum or optimum risk. By contrast, the programme themselves are episodic, with the expectations that once they begin to run they will flow into each other perhaps seamlessly. The risk is what happens if the smallest programme succeeds and the bigger ones fail? Will this affect the overall performance or lead to reshuffling of resources?</p>		

Overall, I think the strength outweighs the risks and I am able to recommend the application for support. However, I am of the view that Scottish Arts Council need to be more involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the transition process currently being undertaken by CT.

Officer's overall priority recommendation

MEDIUM

Lead Officer signature:

Print name:

Femi Folorunso

Date: 04 February 2008
Revised: 20 March 2008

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: Cumbernauld Theatre

The application appeared to say what the organisation wants to do but not how they are going to do it. There was a lack of detail regarding the proposed programme. However, the SAs thought that the venue is moving in the correct direction. There was a well thought out artistic policy, fitting for a 'creative hub'.

There was a lack of detail in relation to planned collaborations and programme content in the application. The organisation appeared to be open to ideas from artists.

There was a high level of ideas, concentrated thought, and an apparent inclusive approach to the local community, targeting a diverse audience

Funding for the organisation was thought to be building on and developing the existing benefit to a range of artists.

Specialist Advisors overall rating: High

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:

Cumbernauld Theatre has a significant role as a venue for presenting professional work, as well as a developed community arts function, and it has also achieved positive responses for its recent home-produced and co-produced work.

Cumbernauld Theatre Trust Limited is a venue based organisation, which had until relatively recently

been both a producing and receiving venue. Its emphasis was on grassroots commitment and engagement. With funding support from the Scottish Arts Council (transitional funding), the company in 2007 embarked on internal re-structure, led by artistic director Ed Robson, who joined the company in 2006. This has included a redesigning of artistic aims and objectives as well as the adoption of a new mode of working.

1. Fit with FXO criteria:

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

The artistic vision has been rated as strong by both the officer and the Specialist Advisors. The proposal involves artists from outwith the organisation- thus providing support to a number and range of artists.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public

The Assessing Officer rates the plans for engagement with the public as fairly robust and achievable. Attendances at c29,000 and 30,000 are significant.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management

The Assessing Officer thinks that there is a rigorous business ethos but notes that there is a deficit. The deficit appears to be manageable.

1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access

The applicant is strong on developing strategies to address disability issues. There is room for development in addressing access for other minority groups.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%

Met.

2. Fit with Departmental priorities

The planned 10 young peoples groups fit with the department priority to some extent.

2.1 Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims

The application fits with the development of artists very well and with increasing participation well.

At the heart of the new artistic aims is what is described in both the application and the business plan as 'creative collaboration'. In practical terms, this means the organisation and its building may henceforth function as a centre and a laboratory where emphasis is placed 'upon building the capacity for and enabling creative communities to emerge: in our professional arts practice, in our work with audiences and in our participatory activities. We make adventurous and meaningful creative journeys that last a life-time'.

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 SAs and the assessing officer felt that there was significant potential in the development plans that were worth supporting. The Assessing Officer rated the application as medium rating and the Specialist Advisors as high.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating

I would rate the application as high given the high artistic ambition and the good level of public engagement with high levels of participation.

1.3 Strengths of application

Artistic ambition and levels of engagement. Attention to developing audiences of disabled people. The theatre's role as part of an overall touring circuit for professional performing arts

1.4 Weaknesses of applications

Existing deficit.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application

Danger of attempting too much. The assessing officer identified the risk that the applicant might take on too many roles and therefore compromise the organisations future. In particular the role as a touring agency needs further scrutiny and consideration.

1.6 Development areas identified

There is that there is no clear separate costing of programme as such. This will make it difficult to analysis where net costs fall and hence make decisions informed by accurate financial information.

1.7 Recommended level of support

In light of the positive responses to the artistic plans, I recommend that this is a high priority for support.

Level recommended £140,000

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

Approximately three quarters of the beneficiaries are stated as being in North Lanarkshire- an area of relatively low professional arts provision. The rest of the beneficiaries are stated as coming form the central belt area around Cumbernauld. While the central belt in itself is reasonably served for arts provision compared with other areas of Scotland, the proposed involvement with the local community is welcome. Attendances of over 59,000 in this area is significant and therefore worth supporting.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation

HIGH

Head of Department's signature:

Print name:

David Taylor

Date: 8 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: Good overall fit with FXO criteria. The amount reflects development areas identified, the competitive funding context and assessment recommendation. Suggested level of support: £140,000 annually.		
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. Suggested level of support: £140,000 annually.		
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		APPROVE
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	£140,000 annually

End of Assessment