

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Dogstar Theatre Company Ltd	
Application Reference number:	G201001052	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£228,963	£177,179
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>DS is recognised by key players in the sector (re submissions of support) as playing an important role in creating work that reflects Highland culture. The company has expressed a strong commitment to developing that work further through flexible support (which also includes a potentially interesting education/ outreach programme). However, it should be noted that DS has a mixed track record in terms of quality (from evaluation reports).</p> <p>The 09-11 programme is not clearly detailed therefore it is difficult to ascertain its viability in terms of quality, delivery and audience development. In that respect the proposal is limited in fitting the criteria for flexible funding (work that is artistically driven or that aims to maximise audience attendance). Additionally, the proposal does not demonstrate a strong fit with the Drama Department stated priorities for work for Children/Young people or site specific work.</p> <p>The education/outreach and touring plans demonstrate a commitment to improving public engagement however the overall programme plans are vague which makes it difficult to ascertain viability of implementation. Given mixed track record on quality there is also limited evidence that the public will experience enhanced engagement through funding of this application.</p> <p>The business plan does not demonstrate good practice in finance, governance and management given that it is underdeveloped. The lead officer believes it does not clearly articulate a driving vision or strategy for long term development.</p> <p>Given this lack of detail or evidence of viability in terms of business practice, audience development and artistic quality the lead officer has rated the application a LOW priority for support.</p>		
Officer's overall priority recommendation		LOW
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: Dogstar Theatre

This organisation is currently project funded.

It was discussed that the marketing and audience support does not appear to be fully developed. The artistic track record has been good, however the SAs did not feel that the work of the company was unique, or was likely to fill a niche, in comparison to other companies. It was felt that its Highland identity was not established to a high degree. The company was not alone in being based in the Highlands.

The application failed to demonstrate that a developed process for artistic development was in place.

Specialist Advisors 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:

Dogstar Theatre Company (DS) was established to tour work (particularly in the Highlands and Islands) in 1999. They mainly tour to small scale rural venues but have also performed in e.g. the Traverse, Tron, Eden Court, Byre, Perth, MacRobert and Dundee Rep. The company has developed links with the Ukraine (a tour in November 2007 funded by SAC, Highlands & Islands Enterprise).

Based in Inverness, DS's main aims are to:

- Create and promote touring theatre
- Commission and develop new plays
- Strengthen links between the written, oral and music traditions of Highland and Gaelic Scotland
- Create workshops/education projects to support development of their work

The company produces plays which reflect local highland culture (and artists). Since 2005 they have received 3 SAC Drama flexible project grants to tour *The Seer* (Ali Smith), *'e Polish Quine* (Henry Adam) and *Tailor Of Inverness* (Matthew Zajac). They were also awarded a Highland Producer's Award for *The Heretic's Tale* (Hamish MacDonald). The applicant has been successful in accessing project funding for a number of productions over recent years and the standard of work has been competent to good according to evaluations. The company tours widely and therefore contributes to the range of work available to small scale venues.

Fit with FXO criteria:

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

Vision is good but not judged to be exemplary. There is a level of support to artists with a small level of international exposure.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public

The company has a good touring record travelling to many rural venues. Projected attendances of c11, 000 is a good level for a touring company but not in the highest range achieved or projected.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management

The assessing officer noted that the business plan is low on detail and so she rated this area low.

1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access

Little information provided in this area aside from generalised intentions.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%

Met

2. Fit with Departmental priorities

No particular fit with Drama priorities. It does not figure significantly in relation to presenting work for children and young people, or in relation to outdoor performance (Drama priority).

Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims

The application meets the aim to fulfil artists potential, but not to a high degree. It would help to increase participation especially in non city centre venues. There is not a strong fit with the aim relating to education.

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

The Specialist Advisors comments and officer assessment reflect respect for the company's achievements but indicate that it does not present itself as artistically unique or exemplary. **The Specialist Advisors rating is low as is the officer's.**

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating

As above

1.3 Strengths of application

An acceptable level of quality but not one that would argue strongly for flexible funding. Good touring pattern and attendance levels.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications

Lack of detail in the business plan and a level of artistic quality that is not exceptional. Lack of demonstrated viability in terms of business practice, and audience development.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application

No specific risks

1.6 Development areas identified

As described under weaknesses

1.7 Recommended level of support

In light of the response to the level of artistic achievement and the lack of a compelling case for the special nature of this company, I would recommend this as Low priority. Not recommended.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

The applicant indicates that it will play in 16 local authority areas, many of these being rural areas. This would achieve a good level of engagement with the public across the country.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation

LOW

Head of Department's signature:

Print name:

David Taylor

Date: 15 February 2008
Revised: 25 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:		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	£