

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Edinburgh Mela	
Application Reference number:	G201001093	
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 <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: The Edinburgh Mela is working in the still young and developmental field of intercultural arts activity in Scotland and has been supported in this work by the Equalities Department at SAC. The company is dedicated to delivering a year-round programme of high artistic and educational quality intercultural arts activity, including producing one of Edinburgh's international festivals that celebrates diversity and creativity. Their plans also reflect their aim of relocating The Edinburgh Mela to a new, higher capacity site within Edinburgh.</p> <p>They are one of a small number of companies working in this field in Scotland and their plans for 2009-11 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a high quality Artistic Programme that showcases in Edinburgh some of the best local, national, professional and community based culturally diverse work • Create platforms for the presentation and development of culturally diverse new work • Create a high quality and educationally sound learning programme • Develop programmes to support the development of artists, arts professionals and educators who are working or wish to work in a culturally diverse way. • Create mechanisms through which members of the community can actively participate in the development and decision making processes of The Edinburgh Mela <p>The festival hope the development of a New Work Mini-Festival will become a valuable platform for artists and arts organisations presenting culturally diverse new work.</p> <p>The company also highlights sustained community development and learning activity as essential to establishing both greater minority ethnic participation in 'mainstream' arts activities, and developing and nurturing true understanding of minority ethnic culture within the wider community. Key points in Edinburgh Mela Learning Policy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a strong, educationally sound and appealing programme of learning activities • Creating a range of mechanisms for people to engage with their work, from development and training programmes for artists, arts professionals and educators through to community participation mechanisms that become integral to their work <p>Edinburgh Mela has developed some good partnerships in Scotland and has exciting and innovative plans for future developments. A strong partnership is in place with local authority.</p> <p>The company recognises that having come from South Asian routes it will be important to work hard over the coming years to re-frame there own and others understanding of the cultural profile of The Edinburgh Mela so it is inclusive to all ethnic groups and people, recognising marketing and audience development as key areas of strategic importance in achieving the cultural re-framing of the Edinburgh</p>		

Mela

Edinburgh Mela is a leader in the field of intercultural activity in Scotland and this application demonstrates excellence in its artistic vision. There is strong support to artists evidenced within the application and significant contribution to the development of artists. Since 2005 audiences have increased by around 20,000 and strong policies and strategies are in place to continue to improve engagement with the public. The company demonstrates good practice in governance and management, aiming to increase access and inclusion through their practices, the budget looks reasonable for the proposed activities. The activity risk is rated as medium and overall value for money rated as high by the FCO. There is a strong commitment to practically implementing the organisations equal opportunities policy and good awareness and policies for widening access. The marketing plan and concepts of evaluation are clearly outlined.

Edinburgh Mela clearly meets the Scottish Arts Council aims of increasing participation in the arts and the supporting of artists and arts organisations to fulfil their creative and business potential.

While the budget is fit for purpose it does request £150k for each of the two years which is a significant increase from this years funding from SAC. While this would support the ongoing development of the company and its work, I also believe that the company could still undertake most of the proposed work on a slightly lower budget.

Officer's overall priority recommendation

HIGH

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 vibrancy in the application from the **Edinburgh Mela** and a reinvigorated artistic direction. The application contained many exciting ideas and ambition, however it requires a more staged and structured development approach to its growth. The panel welcomed the partnership approach embedded in the application but felt that this required a clarified focus.

The panel rated this application as medium 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:

The Edinburgh Mela is an intercultural arts festival taking place at the end of August each year. The organisation has been in receipt of project funding from the Scottish Arts Council through the Equalities department.

1. Fit with FXO criteria:

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

Edinburgh Mela articulates a commitment to *artistic vision and leadership* in the application. The organisation appointed a full-time director in October 2007 who has reinvigorated the artistic focus of the organisation and influenced the plans set out in this application. The organisation aspires to develop its work to delivering a year-round programme of high artistic and educational quality intercultural arts activity, including producing the Mela as one Edinburgh's international festivals that celebrates diversity and creativity. Although the track record to date has been variable, the organisation has the potential to be a significant influence within the cultural sector in Scotland, developing and promoting intercultural arts practice.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public:

Edinburgh Mela meets the criteria of *public engagement*, providing opportunities for a sector of the community often marginalised from arts activity.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management:

Edinburgh Mela is a limited company with charitable status. The Business Plan outlines the Company Structure which has a board of 12 directors with a wide range of experiences, who meet regularly and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the company. The Director reports directly to the board.

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

Edinburgh Mela has an Equal Opportunities Policy and Widening Access Action Plan in place and is committed to being inclusive to all ethnic groups and people through all aspects of the organisation's work.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%:

Edinburgh Mela 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:

Edinburgh Mela contributes to the Scottish Arts Council's Aim 2; '*to increase participation in the arts*' and the plan of work set out in the application also addresses the other aims, particularly Aim 1 '*to support artists to fulfil their creative and business potential*' through the development of new work.

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:

I concur with the Specialist Advisors and rate the application as **medium** priority for support. The Assessing Officer recognises the artistic ambition within the application and the potential impact of the Edinburgh Mela in supporting culturally diverse arts activity and rated the application as a high priority for support

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating:

The organisation meets the criteria for flexible funding and presents an artistically ambitious programme. While this is exciting and encouraging, I have concerns that the business plan requires greater clarity to provide a more robust approach to development. My rating reflects the development areas highlighted.

1.3 Strengths of application:

- meets the flexible funding criteria
- re-invigorated artistic vision and innovative plans for future developments
- a leader in the field of intercultural activity in
- good partnerships with other organisation's in Scotland and local authority

1.4 Weaknesses of application:

- rapid expansion of programme which lacks strategic focus
- significant uplift in funding is requested solely from the Scottish Arts Council, not from the organisation's other funding partners and sources.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application:

The organisation aspires to great expansion and development in its programme at a rapid rate. I concur with the Specialist Advisors in recommending a more staged and structured development approach to its growth, believing that this would sustain the organisation in the longer-term.

1.6 Development areas identified:

A stronger strategic focus to development of organisation and activity based on consolidation and steady growth. If supported I recommend that a revised budget and programme of work is sought, which reflects a more focused approach to consolidation and development.

1.7 Recommended level of support:

Within the context of competition for funds and the comments above on a more focused approach to development, if this application is supported I would recommend that it is at a maximum level of £70,000 in 2009/10.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place?

Edinburgh Mela is based in Edinburgh City and the majority of their proposed programme will take place in the city and in the neighbouring local authority areas (Lothian region) and Glasgow.

1.2 Where will the audience come from?

Edinburgh Mela anticipates that the audience is predominantly from Edinburgh but also attracts people from Glasgow and, could impact throughout Scotland if touring work.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation

MEDIUM

Head of Department's signature:

Print name:

Anita Clark

Date: 14 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: £50,000 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: £50,000 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	£50,000 annually

End of Assessment