

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Lung Ha's	
Application Reference number:	G201001014	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£132,500	£135,550
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: Overall, this is a good proposal which fits well into some of Arts Council's policy and on-going activity development areas.</p> <p>From all the available comments and analyses of its work to-date, it seems the main strength of Lung Ha's Theatre Company is its ability to bring artistic integrity and professionalism to the area of arts and health, using the medium of theatre. This is well demonstrated in the two main documents.</p> <p>But while the vision, mission and plans of the applicant are clear and well communicated within the proposal and the business plan, the final picture that emerges is one of practical rather than a thoughtful long-term approach.</p> <p>Lung Ha's was established in 1984 with the aim of 'providing opportunities for people with learning disabilities to be actively involved in the performing arts.' (Annual Report and Accounts 2007, page 2). Having a membership structure and a practice that seeks input from its members can be seen as a factor in its success. The expert reviews of Lung Ha's work suggest that it is fulfilling its mission to its members.</p> <p>Yet looking at the proposal and the business plan in detail, one gets the impression that the organisation is weak on the business practice side. By business practice, it is meant the network of activities, other than technical, that supports the company's work. This will include promotion (from marketing to public relations), audience development and business development initiatives including targeted/exclusive programming for income generating purposes. Although there is a commitment to increasing audiences over the period of funding, the overall evidence for business development is weak.</p> <p>The presentation of the business plan itself bears out this weakness. The document is poorly laid out, has no table of contents, no prime headings, no sub-headings, and no clear milestones tied to company objectives or vision etc. Most of the details set out in the plan for achieving the company's aims seems formulaic and appears to have been written specifically to meet the requirements of Scottish Arts Council's funding. There is also the issue of fund raising over a longer term. Although the current request to the Scottish Arts Council is not unusual (74% of total operating cost), the reliance on 'public sources' for funding is high and too risky in terms of the future of the company. Given this risk alone, one would have expected the company to prepare a rigorous and thoroughly professional business plan that looks more critically at the operating environment as well as its own revenue generating capability (including approaches to statutory bodies such as SAC and Local Authorities).</p> <p>The reason I am concerned about these lapses is because they raise a question about the</p>		

effectiveness or indeed adequacy of the company's existing management and staffing structure and whether this is suited to future operational challenges. This question is not rhetorical since an organisation's management and staffing structure is inseparable from its ability to deliver programme and grow activities, including nurturing new audiences, on both short and long term bases. The proposal shows that there is a need for what might be called 'business skill' refinement within the company. For example, in addition to a lack of structure in the business plan, it is also observed that there is no breakdown on the cost of marketing and education/outreach in the budget. And given the overall tone of the application, it is clear that this omission is more than an oversight. It is debatable whether the proposal is not overplaying the 'strategic role' of the company as 'a provider for special need people' when in fact the company could be seeking a more ambitious foothold that goes beyond meeting the immediate needs of its primary membership.

It is true that some of the risks associated with the identified weaknesses in the business plan are mitigated by the current 'artistic output' and 'quality'. However, it is worth pointing out that the future of organisations such as Lung Ha's will depend in large measure on a careful marriage of artistic output with sound management practice, including the ability to expand its services to the independent sector (beyond its dedicated membership).

On governance, it is difficult to say how much the board membership reveals visible racial diversity in terms of membership. This issue is particularly important in view of the increase in recent times on health issues within the non-white immigrant groups and also the emergence of dedicated BME health and care charities and facilities. Lung Ha's needs to look into this issue not least because it needs to mainstream its own activities if only because there is a statutory obligation on it to do so.

There are also one or two conceptual issues that have been thrown up by this proposal, which need to be resolved through dialogue with the applicant. For example, I am concerned that the organisation may unintentionally be slipping in its practice from its hitherto well-focused social model approach to a top down one. I certainly obtain this impression from the language of the proposal.

I would recommend this application as a medium priority for support in view of other comments above. And if the proposal was successful, an independent evaluation and assessment of Lung Ha's, especially with respect to its long term business and administrative capacity and performance, is recommended as a condition of funding. This should be discussed and agreed with the organisation as a condition of award.

Officer's overall priority recommendation		MEDIUM
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 30/01/08 Revised: 20 March 2008
Print name:	Femi Folorunso	

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: Lung Ha's

The panel agreed that the artistic vision was not well articulated, it serves a function for the community the company works with very well. The planned collaboration with Grid Iron was very exciting. (This was reflected in the Grid Iron application.)

It was felt that the company would find it difficult to work on a project to project basis, given the nature of the participants and their specific needs.

The SAs felt that the quality of the productions could be variable but accepted that it might be difficult for the company to abandon a project if it was not shaping up as intended.

It was felt that the Director of the company had a well developed understanding of the participants and was able to realise good results overall.

SA 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:

Lung Ha's Theatre Company was set up in 1984 primarily to 'provide opportunities for people with learning disabilities to become actively involved in the performing arts' (from the company's business plan). The company aims to do this through

- Presenting performing arts events of a high professional standard to the general public
- Challenging stereotypical perceptions - particularly those regarding learning disabilities
- Behaving in a way that widens understanding of people's potential and abilities
- Encouraging a greater provision of arts opportunities for people with learning disabilities
- A culture that is respectful, supportive and challenging

Fit with FXO criteria:

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

Strong artistic vision and provides leadership in this area of work - i.e. professional drama produced with adults with learning disabilities. It provides considerable support to the participants and is unique within the sector.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public

This is an area where there is scope for development. The assessing officer noted that the marketing could be improved.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management

The management and governance are appropriate.

1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access

Widening access is the core business of the company.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%

Met

2. Fit with Departmental priorities

No particular fit with Drama priorities

3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council Aims

Meets the aim of enabling artists to fulfil their potential very well; and it also meets the aim of increasing participation very well.

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/ 1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating

The assessing officer rates the application as medium and the Specialist Advisors as high. The SAs recognised the company's artistic achievements and considered its way of working with the participants to be strong. The artistic achievement was also noted by the assessing officer, but he was concerned that there was a lack of focus on developing audiences and that the business side of the application needed development. The relatively low numbers of audience members appear to reflect the concern by the assessing officer in relation marketing and audience development.

1.3 Strengths of application

The applicant occupies a unique role and has good partnerships planned- that are confirmed by the partner's application. The work is generally of a high standard and the company has a store of expertise and experience in this work.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications

There is scope for improving the marketing and business side of the company.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application

No specific risks

1.6 Development areas identified

Marketing

1.7 Recommended level of support

£132,000 in year one and £135,000 in year two.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

The activity is stated as taking place in Edinburgh and Glasgow for the Full Production, although the application indicates that a small –scale tour would have wider reach, but details are not provided. The company appears to have impact through consultation and speaking engagements in areas beyond Glasgow and Edinburgh. In general the geographic reach appears to be reasonable given the nature of the work.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation

HIGH

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. The amount reflects development areas identified, the competitive funding context and assessment recommendation. Suggested level of support: £80,000 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: £80,000 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	£80,000 annually

End of Assessment