

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Magnetic North	
Application Reference number:	G201001043	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£149,951	£215,604
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 application demonstrates a commitment to providing opportunities for artists to realise their potential (eg through the Rough Mix programme). It includes a range of interesting projects which demonstrate collaboration between artists in different disciplines. In view of this I would recommend it is considered as a high priority for support, however do so without full knowledge of other proposals competing for funds.</p> <p>I would recommend supporting the increase in overheads and core staffing costs in order to enable Magnetic North to realise its potential.</p> <p>The request may be on the high side and if elements of the project cannot be supported I recommend that these be (in the first instance) the web\social networking audience development project and perhaps the Creative Dialogues proposals.</p>		
Officer's overall priority recommendation		HIGH
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 31 January 2008 Revised: 20 March 2008
Print name:	Gillian Shaw	

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: Magnetic North

From their knowledge the SAs thought that Nicolas Bone, the Artistic Director, was an interesting artist but felt that the work to date had been uneven - there was a lack of stability in relation to the

'back-catalogue'. The company was a good text-based company but there was little to differentiate it from others in the same category. Some questioned why certain topics led the company to conceive of a theatrical piece, as the topic may not be inherently dramatic.

The 'Rough Mix' process was thought to be of value. The SAs felt that the company was worthwhile and would like to see it develop further.

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:

Magnetic North is based in Edinburgh and was established in 1999. It has previously received funding for Drama projects and from Visual Arts. Magnetic North focuses on text based work and creative collaboration. The company aims to create two productions a year, at least one of which tours, and runs a development programme called Rough Mix which is for established and emerging artists working across a range of artforms. The first Rough Mix took place in Edinburgh in 2006. Since 2005 the company has developed collaborative projects involving artists from a range of different artforms. The application refers to 4 productions, the launch of Rough Mix and Creative Training – eg with Diageo, using creative skills in a business setting. In 2005-2006 Magnetic North undertook a creative and business review with support from Arts & Business' Skills Bank. The company is one of a number that currently create and tour work with support from project funds. They focus on text-based work but work with cross-disciplinary artists. They target a general audience.

1. *Fit with FXO criteria:*

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

The company's vision is good and provides an interesting model for the development of work. The company works with a range of artists including Scottish playwrights and artists from different disciplines.

1.2 *Improving your engagement with the public*

The proposal includes touring fairly widely across the country and this will allow audiences to engage with the work. There is also a proposal to use social networks in order to develop audiences. The anticipated attendances are reasonable given the small to mid-scale venues that the company aims to serve.

1.3 *Good practice in the governance and management*

The company is set up appropriately.

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

The company plans to instigate a programme of sign language interpreted and audio-described performances combined with touch-tours.

1.5 *Raising other income at least 25%*

Met.

2. *Fit with Departmental priorities*

No particular fit with Departmental priorities.

Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims

The applications fits with the aim of fulfilling artists' potential through the process of creation and by producing the work of writers, and increasing participation through providing access to quality work through touring.

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 SAs clearly thought that the company's artistic process had value but there were reservations about the outcomes. The assessing officer felt that the way of working was very positive and supported artists to realise their potential.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating

Some issues have been raised about the company's differentiation from other text based companies. However, in light of the desirability of having a company of this nature that takes innovative work across the country, I would rate this application as medium.

1.3 Strengths of application

Good artistic outcomes and attention to the process. Good geographic spread.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications

No major weaknesses, but the work is not considered to be highly exceptional.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application

No specific risks.

1.6 Development areas identified

Possible co-production partnerships in order to maximise output.

1.7 Recommended level of support

£175,000 pa

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

The applicant has not provided detail of the venues to be visited, but asserts that it will play across Scotland. Its track record for geographical spread is good and therefore I think this is reasonable.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation

MEDIUM

Head of Department's signature:

Print name:

David Taylor

Date: 15 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: Some fit with FXO criteria but relatively weak in comparison to others, in the context of a highly competitive funding round. Not recommended for support.		
Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation		LOW 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		LOW 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