

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Moniack Mhor	
Application Reference number:	G201001015	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£79,293	£79,293
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: Moniack Mhor is the only Arvon-designated dedicated writing centre in Scotland, and as such is unique, and national (and increasingly international) in remit. 2,700 students have attended MM since its inception, and the students have ranged in age from 16-93. 330 tutors and 165 guest readers have worked on the courses. In addition to these statistics are the figures from work with schools and commercial / charity partnership courses.</p> <p>Moniack Mhor's Arvon courses are currently operating at 86% capacity. The organisation has a strong track record of delivering excellent writing courses and retreats. It works with a diverse selection of groups and partners (such as the Scottish Poetry Library and the Edinburgh International Book Festival). It is also important to stress that MM operates in a UK as well as a Scottish context, by attracting students and writer-tutors from outwith Scotland. This is of healthy benefit to our literary ecology and visibility.</p> <p>The organisation meets the all of the strategic priority areas of the Literature Department fully.</p> <p>Plans for widening of access are in place, and these are based on findings from market research and will see the organisation targeting non-traditional users as well as expanding provision to reach primary school children in areas of multiple deprivation, university students and second language speakers (in particular those from Eastern Europe who are resident in Scotland.)</p> <p>The organisation intends to develop provision slowly and reasonably, consolidating partnerships and expanding in a meaningful way. The proposals are realistic and achievable within the proposed funding package. Plans are in place for the steady growth of courses and CPD sessions offered – this is a measured and sustainable approach. Education activities currently comprise 15% of the activity of the centre. It is envisaged that this will increase to 20%. The outreach activities are solid and well constructed. Artistic quality is ensured via rigorous criteria and close liaison with other Arvon centres. The plans for evaluation are sound.</p> <p>The organisation demonstrates a good, progressive approach to equal opportunities with an implementation plan and future proposals for further development of provision to allow for greater equality of access.</p> <p>The business plan is exemplary, and the organisation demonstrates good practice with regard to financial and managerial matters. MM has a supportive, mixed Board and a good working relationship with the Local Authority (although it is not funded by the authority)</p> <p>MM seeks a funding increase from £56,701 to £79,293. This represents 38% of the overall costs and would allow for expansion of the programme and exploration of new ways of working with partners (eg</p>		

Mental Health Service users).

Moniack Mhor performs a unique role in Scotland's literary life and well-being, and performs it with flair, dedication, and skill. It is a further example of how modest investment can yield substantial, long-term benefit to literature's continuing success, and for that reason, it is an organisation to be nurtured.

Officer's overall priority recommendation

HIGH

Lead Officer signature:

Date: 31/01/08

Print name:

Emma Turnbull

Revised: 20/3/08

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?

The panel consisted of Dr Tony Bianchi, former Literature Director, Arts Council of Wales; Claire Malcolm, Director, New Writing North (England); and Professor Alan Riach, .Department of Scottish Literature, University of Glasgow.

Comments:

As Scotland's only dedicated Arvon Centre for Creative Writing in Scotland, the Advisors considered Moniack Mhor to demonstrate a unique and essential national role in Scotland's literary life and ecology. Furthermore, because of its strong affiliation with the Arvon Foundation - a solidly established, recognised, and admired UK institution – Moniack Mhor facilitates important cross-fertilisation and exchange between Scottish writing and the wider literary culture of the United Kingdom. It was agreed that the nature of Moniack Mhor's work, objectives, and achievements are also valuably long-term in nature.

The consistently high quality of Moniack Mhor's programmes, and the high capacity of its courses, confirm the organisation's strong vision, firm application of strict criteria, and thorough evaluation procedures. It is evident from the application that Moniack Mhor courses regularly out-perform other Arvon centres. It was thought that there was scope for MM to increase its own marketing outwith Arvon channels to enhance its partnership-working and profile in Scotland (for example the highly-successful workshop programme at EIBF). Moniack Mhor's course season is shorter than the UK Arvon norm, due to location and climate factors, and it is encouraging to see plans to extend this.

Moniack Mhor is rated by the panel as a high 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:

Moniack Mhor provides a unique, and essential, role in Scotland's literary life for the reasons outlined above, and fully meets the Department's priorities, and all SAC aims, in a powerful and coherent way. It is building upon its successful track-record in partnership working, both nationally and

internationally, and with the cottage (which accommodates writer-tutors) now refurbished to self-sufficiency, it is in a position to expand its programme of writers' retreats, including hosting more writers from overseas.

The Advisors' comments on the long-term nature of Moniack Mhor's work and objectives are particularly noteworthy, as the Department recommended Foundation status for the organisation at the time of Strategic Review.

1. Fit with FXO criteria:

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

Strong, coherent vision as a unique national organisation; central role in the sector and in creative development of established and emergent writers.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public:

Artistic programme will engage new audiences; increase awareness of the benefits of creative writing; increased uptake of courses and the diversification of audiences/participants.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management:

A strong and diverse Board and highly professional and committed staff.

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

Demonstrates excellent, progressive practise with relation to equal opportunities and plans to increase demographic reach, and to include new ethnic minorities.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%:

Meets matched funding requirement.

2. Fit with Departmental priorities:

Strongly meets priority for

- *enhanced opportunities for writers, publishers, and readership development in national and international contexts*

3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims:

Strongly meets all three aims.

4. 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

Moniack Mhor is entering a new phase of development built upon its consistent success, and on the basis of a business plan, which is exemplary. It has acted upon the Department's recommendation that the staff structure needs to be revised by upgrading one of the existing Co-Director posts to Centre Director, to further improve the organisation's professionalism and profile. To meet the costs of this and other planned expansion of the programme, it is requesting an additional £23k. This represents 38% of the overall costs.

1.1 Application rating:

I concur with the lead officer and Specialist Advisors and rate this application as a high priority for support.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating:

Unique national role and remit and strong artistic vision and leadership, playing an essential part in development of the sector, and places Scottish writing firmly in a wider UK context.

1.3 Strengths of application:

- Strong track record in delivery and development
- Plans for expansion of demographic reach and retreats
- Evidence of organisation's long-term work and impact

1.4 Weaknesses of applications:

- Small deficit in current year

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application:

No significant risks identified.

1.6 Development areas identified:

Enhance marketing profile outwith Arvon relationship through increased partnership working.

1.7 Recommended level of support:

To the level requested: £79,293 (Years 1 and 2)

5. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

Moniack Mhor is a national organisation which attracts both students and prestigious writer-tutors from all over Scotland and the UK, and, increasingly, from abroad. Its work exemplifies a balance between its powerful regional affinities, and its broad national remit.

1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place?:

The Highlands and Central Belt

1.2 Where will the audience come from?:

From Scotland and the UK.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation

HIGH

Head of Department's signature:

Print name

Dr Gavin Wallace

Date: 15 Feb 2009

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: Strong overall fit with FXO criteria. The amount reflects the competitive funding context. Support of £70,000 annually is proposed.		
Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation		High
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. Support of £70,000 annually is proposed.		
Directors recommendations to Joint Board		High
Acting Chief Executive signature:	Jim Tough	Date: 10 April 2008

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	£70,000

End of Assessment