

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	NVA	
Application Reference number:	G201001085	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£209,864	£216,160
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</p> <p><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:</p> <p>NVA's work has acted as a catalyst in developing natural heritage as a cultural resource. Its programme will allow it to further its aim to articulate perceptions of place, people and nature, national identity and inherited notions of romanticism and the sublime and to respond to demand from potential stakeholders. It receives a high level of media coverage at an international level and the audience feedback provided is very positive. However, SAC performance evaluations are mixed, with 50% good, 33% competent and 17% poor. NVA has a demonstrable commitment to education and outreach although there are few details provided about activities in 2009-11. Projected audience numbers are high, but probably achievable. It is not possible to assess geographic reach as there is no information on where the new capital project will be, although NVA plans to increase accessibility to its work via new technology.</p> <p>The business plan states NVA's vision and plans for the organisation clearly, with an explanation of its overall objectives. There is an artistic programme outline, but this does not fully articulate the artistic rationale for programme choices and there is little detail provide on its new capital project.</p> <p>It should be noted that NVA's work requires long term planning to enable project development and securing (usually) multiple stakeholders and funders. It is understandable at this stage that NVA would not be able to detail all future stakeholders, but there are no details of any potential partners or what stage negotiations may have reached.</p> <p>NVA is projecting an increase of 43% in 2009/10. This would cover core costs (staff and overheads.) The rationale for this is that because NVA has insufficient funding to cover its core costs it has been trying to generate additional income through small-scale commercial work. Its Board has decided that this model should not be continued as it dissipates staff time and reduces capacity to focus on the quality of its main projects. There is no expansion of activity as such.</p> <p>NVA's programme meets the SAC cross artform priority of developing collaborative working and artistic practice which crosses artform boundaries. However it is difficult to fully assess how well the programme and business plan meet the fund criteria because of a lack of information provided on artistic activities and education/outreach activities specific to them; governance, potential stakeholders, management, staffing structures, project budgets.</p>		
Officer's overall priority recommendation		MEDIUM
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 04/02/2008
Print name:	Jaine Lumsden	Revised: 20 March 2008

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:

In the application **NVA** articulated a strong and inspiring artistic vision in environmental arts practice. The panel recognised that the organisation has a strong track record of exciting and spectacular artistic work. However, they were slightly concerned that NVA might be following repeated models and would have liked to have been surprised with new artistic ideas or see the organisation challenging itself more evidently. The panel recognised that NVA has a unique role in Scotland with an international reputation and that it engages a broad range of audiences. The panel recommended that the organisation considers more consistently the accessibility of some of its work, and considers public engagement more clearly than is articulated in the business plan.

The panel rated this application as 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:

NVA is a well established organisation with a mission to encourage international pioneering artists to produce complex and ambitious site specific work. Its work seeks to position Scotland in an international context, through working with international artists and through promoting a pluralistic vision of society locally and into the wider world. NVA works across all media (visual arts, music, installation, performance, environmental animation) and it has developed new technologies to enable its delivery. Its productions are often very large-scale and require substantial development time and significant partnership income. Its work often directly engages the local community within which it takes place and includes education programmes.

1. *Fit with FXO criteria:*

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

NVA strongly meets the FXO criteria of 'artistic excellence' and demonstrates a distinctive and unique role in the arts infrastructure in Scotland.

1.2 *Improving your engagement with the public*

NVA demonstrates a commitment to '*public engagement*', although this could be strengthened with a more robust audience development approach

1.3 *Good practice in the governance and management*

NVA is a limited company with charitable status. The lead officer recognises the company's strong track record in effective project management but little information was included in the application on management of the programme or board membership and reporting structures.

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

NVA's work has engaged marginalised communities in an urban and rural context and the organisation demonstrates a commitment to encouraging access to its work through its outreach and

education programmes. However, an equal opportunities policy was not included in the application.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%

NVA has met the matched funding requirement.

2. Fit with Departmental priorities

NVA demonstrates a commitment to the *development of collaborative working and artistic practice which crosses artform boundaries*, in strong alignment with the Cross Art Form priority for Flexible funding

3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims

NMI's vision and proposed plan of work contribute across the Scottish Arts Council's aims, most significantly to Aims 1 and 2: *'to support artists to fulfil their artistic and business potential'* and *'to increase participation in the arts.'*

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 Assessing officer and rate this application as medium priority for support.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating

While I concur with the Specialist Advisors assessment of the strong artistic vision articulated by NVA, the lack of detail in the application as highlighted by the assessing officer has informed the rating.

1.3 Strengths of application

- strongly meets the criteria for Flexible funding and the cross arts priority
- innovative approach and international reputation
- distinctive role in the Scottish cultural sector
- commitment to encouraging access to its work through its outreach and education programmes.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications

- lack of information on the future artistic programme
- lack of information on future partners and stakeholders
- limited information on management and governance of organisation.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application

The most significant risks associated with this application are the levels of partnership funding required to enable the projects to be delivered and the lack of information provided on potential stakeholders. It is recognised that NVA's approach requires long term planning to enable project development and that the company have a strong track record in this work.

1.6 Development areas identified

NVA should be challenged to ensure they stay at the forefront of artistic innovation and do not fall into the trap of simply repeating successful models of working. I would also recommend that regular up-dates on the artistic programme proposals with details on partners and stakeholders is sought as a condition of grant

<p><i>1.7 Recommended level of support</i> NVA is seeking a significant increase in funding. Within the current tight financial environment, I am not convinced that NVA have sufficiently justified this increase and recommend funding at a level consistent with current support.</p>		
<p>4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme</p>		
<p>Comments: <i>1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place?</i> NVA is based in Glasgow. In the application they have stated that they will work throughout and outside Scotland but have not provided details on where specifically these activities will take place. <i>1.2 Where will the audience come from?</i> Information not provided.</p>		
<p>Head of Department's overall priority recommendation</p>		<p>Medium</p>
<p>Head of Department's signature:</p>		<p>Date: 14 February 2008 Revised: 26 March 2008</p>
<p>Print name:</p>	<p>Anita Clark</p>	

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: £150,000 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: £150,000 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	£150,000 annually

End of Assessment