

## FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

<b>Applicant name:</b>	Sound	
<b>Application Reference number:</b>	G201001075	
<b>Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)</b>	£44,000	£44,500
<b>Officer's recommendation</b>		
<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>		
<b>Comments:</b>		
<p>The festival has developed organically from the pilot project and has established a good name for its devolved programming approach and the quality of the artists it has programmed and commissioned.</p> <p>Education and master-class programme is integrated fully into the festival.</p> <p>I think audience levels and earned income via ticket sales and workshop fees need to be increased to create a more balanced festival.</p> <p>I think the request for support represents a significant increase and perhaps a staggered approach, which is supported more equitably by Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire councils might be possible.</p> <p>LA authority support should match Scottish Arts Council funding more closely and earned income should be increased. An award at this level will probably require reworked budgets.</p>		
<b>Officer's overall priority recommendation</b>		<b>MEDIUM</b>
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 31 January 2008 Revised: 27 February 2008
Print name:	Stuart Thomas	

## 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 Murray Buchanan, Paul Bream, Jim Gaitens, Rachel Nelken and Susan Nickalls, with ratings received from Marie Fielding by email.

### Comments:

- The panel would like to see the festival continue to raise its profile across Scotland.
- The panel felt that the festival had made a very good case for approaching broadcasting partners.
- The panel felt that the organisation showed excellent potential and achieved a significant geographical spread of activity in an area underserved by professional arts organisations.
- The panel recommended that funding this organisation was good value for money to put a proper infrastructure for the festival in place. The panel also recognised the significant volunteer input that was not directly reflected in the budget.

The panel rated the importance of the application in being supported as **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:

It is difficult to believe that Sound has only existed for three years, as it has become in that short time a significant member of the Scottish festival's circuit and provides performance and creative opportunities for audiences in the predominantly rural communities of the North-East of Scotland embracing Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. The festival has been run on a "volunteer" basis with their director working on a freelance contract and achieving extraordinary results with very little administrative support.

Sound has quickly established itself as a facilitator and promoter of contemporary music and uniquely, rather like Fèisean nan Gàidheal, MMS (Making Music Scotland) and EMS (Enterprise Music Scotland) acts as an umbrella organisation for clubs and societies in the north-east (of Scotland) to programme new work under the promotional and organisational auspices of Sound. This is also an area of Scotland with a significant, if disparate populace, that is grossly under-served by the arts and Sound uses innovative performance spaces which include the Barn in Banchory-such a good example of community involvement at all levels.

Sound also prioritises learning and holds many workshops for all ages that surround the creativity and new work that feature, together with the composers/musicians, many of whom are already expert in the workshop scenario.

**1. Fit with FXO criteria:** Fully.

**1.1 Excellent artistic vision and leadership; role within sector/support to artists:** Sound has quickly become one of the key events in Scotland, serving mixed urban and rural communities with a developing relationship with local authorities and the HE sector. Sound supports creativity and new work throughout the event with a high emphasis on education and outreach work.

**1.2 Improving your engagement with the public:** As per the specialist advisor's remarks, Sound is seeking to expand its portfolio of venues and become a significant event for Scotland, rather than simply for the north-east.

**1.3 Good practice in the governance and management:** Extraordinary development has been achieved by what is essentially a tiny volunteer team led by one programming director.

**1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access:** Sound will further develop their equal opportunities policy and are steadily widening access to the event.

**1.5 Raising other income at least 25%:** Yes.

**2. Fit with Departmental priorities:** Sound is one of our key organisations now and develops contemporary music together with providing performances of the highest standard. Sound also has a strong education and outreach remit.

**3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims:** Fully.

**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:**

The administrative infrastructure of Sound now needs serious development and FTE staffing. The festival has been run very successfully on an incredibly modest budget and has still not fallen into a deficit situation which is of great credit to the small, but passionate administrative team that currently run the event.

The current director wants to consolidate what has been achieved, to date and to significantly expand the activities and programme of Sound throughout the next three years. She also wants to expand the consortia of participating partners in the region to ensure the widest geographical dispersal of high quality product during the event.

Partnerships with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire are key, but there is also an effective partnership with the University of Aberdeen which will lead to the Biennial Aberdeen Contemporary Music Prize being scheduled as part of Sound this year. This is a high profile event that attracts composers and new work from around the world and will provide an additional focus for this year's festival, to be continued for the next two years.

The planned output of the event is shown as static in terms of concert performances and this is probably wise, as the event in 2007 probably reached saturation point regarding the number and diversity of shows promoted. FTE administration is essential to move this forward. The request for funding is for £44K and 44.5K respectively which may appear a little high, but not when putting into place a full administrative review and additional staff and employing the director on a FTE contract. The Specialist Adviser's panel felt that the request for funding was not high when taking into account

the essential restructuring of the administration, putting it onto a FTE contract and being able to employ marketing expertise and assist in audience development.

I agree with the assessment of the Specialist Advisors that Sound is a high priority.

**1.1 Application rating: High**

Whilst taking into consideration the assessing officer's comments I fully concur with the Specialist Advisor's panel that this application should be rated high.

**1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating:** The diversity and high quality of the programme together with the attention paid to contemporary and creative work, especially within the community and educational environment.

**1.3 Strengths of application:** Quality, diversity, access and distribution.

**1.4 Weaknesses of applications:** More FTE administration is now essential to move Sound on.

**1.5 Specific risks associated with the application:** Moving steadily forward as funding and partnerships allow, which will be achievable.

**1.6 Development areas identified:** FTE administration as a priority.

**1.7 Recommended level of support:** £44,000 for both years.

**4.** Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

**Comments:**

The geographical spread of Sound is important as the event has been able to explore "new territory" for the arts in a comparatively short time. Like all festivals there is also a significant input to the region from internationally acclaimed professional musicians.

**1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place?** Throughout Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

**1.2 Where will the audience come from?** The audience for Sound is increasingly wide ranging and with the inclusion of the University of Aberdeen Music Prize within the portfolio, international input will inevitably grow.

<b>Head of Department's overall priority recommendation</b>		<b>HIGH</b>
<b>Head of Department's signature:</b>		<b>Date: 15 February 2008 Revised 25 March 2008</b>
<b>Print name:</b>	<b>Ian Smith</b>	

<b>Stage 3: Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) make recommendations to Directors (Acting Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive and Co-Directors of Arts)</b>		
1. Summarise the reasons why the final rating has been made.		
<b>Comments:</b> Strong overall fit with FXO criteria. Fund (nearly) at the level requested. Support of £44,000 annually is proposed.		
<b>Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation</b>		High
Chair of Meeting signature:		Date: 2 April 2008
Print name:	Iain Munro	

<b>Stage 4: Directors make recommendations to Joint Board (strategic fit)</b>		
Record the Directors' recommendation and confirm the suggested level of support. If the recommendation differs from Stage 3, please summarise the reasons why.		
<b>Comments:</b> Agree with Stage 3 recommendation. Support of £44,000 annually is proposed.		
<b>Directors recommendations to Joint Board</b>		High
Acting Chief Executive signature:	Jim Tough	Date: 10 April 2008

<b>Stage 5: Joint Board's decisions</b>		
Record the Joint Board's recommendation. If the recommendation differs from Stage 4, please summarise the reasons why.		
<b>Comments:</b> The Joint Board accepts the Stage 4 recommendation.		
<b>Joint Board Final Decision</b>		<b>APPROVE</b>
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	£44,000

**End of Assessment**