

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Traditional Music & Song Association	
Application Reference number:	G201001000	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£46,000	£48,000
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>		
Comments:		
<p>The TMSA is an organisation that has an important historical place but currently does not seem to be fully representative of the full range of traditional music and does not have the mandate of the Traditional music sector nor appear to be serving their interests and needs.</p> <p>Membership appears to be static or declining. There have been no new branches for a number of years. The level and quality of branch activity varies widely. Whilst claiming a Scotland-wide remit they only operate in eleven areas.</p> <p>If they are only serving a small-sector and their membership then the membership subscriptions should pay for the running of the organisation. If they wish to take on the national remit they must get the wider support of the traditional music community and organisations, the musicians, develop significant strategic partnerships and expand both their membership base and the number of branches.</p> <p>Whilst they have undertaken some good work recently (Sessions, Young Trad Tour, Conference) this has only been achieved with additional project funding. With the exception of this, the TMSA as currently configured does not directly provide any artistic or educational activity.</p> <p>Whilst comprehensive, the development plan does not encourage radical or critical review.</p> <p>Financially there are large unsecured funding targets to be secured with no outline of possible sources. They are also counting upon additional ongoing project support from Scottish Arts Council in addition to an increase in flexible funding.</p> <p>Overall there is a poor alignment to the Flexible funding priorities and the Music Department's priorities as well as a number of significant issues with the organisation and their application therefore I have rated this application as LOW priority.</p>		
Officer's overall priority recommendation		LOW
Lead Officer signature:		Date:26 January 2008 Revised: 20 March 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 felt that from the evidence provided, the organisation needs to work hard to stay in touch with an increasingly creative professional sector.
- The panel recognised that the Events Calendar, Young Trad Tour and annual conference were all good initiatives.
- The panel felt that there was a good balance between professional and amateur musical involvement with the organisation.

The panel rated the importance of the application in being supported as **Medium – Low**.

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:

The TMSA were a significant organisation for the Scottish Arts Council at a time when the traditional music sector in Scotland was neither properly organised, nor co-ordinated or professional. In my experience of the Scottish music industry aligned to the wider UK and European folk and acoustic music scene, the traditional music sectors in both Scotland and Ireland have shown the most incredible and sustained growth, both in terms of performance-based activity and in the economic returns for the sector, internationally.

I would question whether the TMSA now enjoys such a significant role within its core sector. These questions and associated concerns are also raised by the Specialist Advisor's panel and by the assessing officer (Stuart Thomas). The organisation itself has been at "standstill" regarding its core operation and any of the more interesting, engaging and potentially challenging activities for the sector have been met through additional project funding.

The TMSA has experienced no structural growth and/or expansion of its branch activity and its reputation regarding promoting quality output has largely been determined by the more effective and innovative branches, such as Glasgow, rather than by the organisation as a whole.

I fully agree with the Specialist Advisors and assessing officer that the organisation needs a fundamental root and branch review that goes beyond the development plans submitted with the application and it is evident that the TMSA no longer leads in this valuable sector that is so crucially important to our sector forum development priorities.

1. Fit with FXO criteria: In part.

1.1 Excellent artistic vision and leadership; role within sector/support to artists: The TMSA no longer fulfils a leadership role in their sector. Much of their activity is commendable, but the sector has moved on whereas the organisation has not always matched that pace of change.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public: TMSA effectively engages with the public in the Young Trad Tour and in its partnership with Celtic Connections, but other partnerships are crucial to that engagement too.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management: The governance and management of TMSA has undergone some changes and their branch structure needs a fundamental overhaul.

1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access: TMSA administers what is essentially a branch structure. They are open and inclusive but need more detail on equal opportunity areas.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%: Yes, but difficult to accurately determine based on the information provided.

2. Fit with Departmental priorities: In terms of sectoral development for traditional music, yes.

3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims: Probably closest to meeting the second aim.

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 TMSA is an organisation that needs to understand that the sector it has loyally served for so many years has changed, almost beyond the point of recognition from what it once was. It is more commercial and interacts with other sectors in the music industry. The advent of the Trad Awards, BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards, BBC Radio Scotland Young Scottish Traditional Musician of the Year Awards, TuneUp, Celtic Connections, Distill, Showcase Scotland and of course, our own traditional music forum has changed the face of this sector, which is now fully a vibrant and economically vitally important component of the wider music industry.

The branch structure of the TMSA needs serious review and possibly restructuring and it is now evident that the TMSA is no longer seen by the wider constituency as market leaders. The TMSA is not, on current evidence, expanding its membership and/or its outreach activities and may be better served by seeking partnerships that would assist it to revitalise its organisational abilities. We have long suggested a closer working relationship with the SMC (Scottish Music Centre), but this does not appear to have taken place.

I can only rate this application as low in the current funding climate.

1.1 Application rating: Low

I have taken great care in assessing this application, but feel on balance when assessing the commentary from both officer and specialist advisor, that TMSA is now in need of such fundamental review that my assessment should be low. I am keen that the sector does not lose any potential for ongoing investment, but whether that is directed by TMSA is another question.

<p>1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating: Given above and in my detailed commentary.</p> <p>1.3 Strengths of application: There are elements of TMSA activity that are strong, not least their events calendar and Young Trad Tour, but the tour would not happen without other significant partnership and organisational input.</p> <p>1.4 Weaknesses of applications: A lack of focus and strategic thinking for the future.</p> <p>1.5 Specific risks associated with the application: Unsecured funding.</p> <p>1.6 Development areas identified: A major review of all activities and operation.</p> <p>1.7 Recommended level of support: Standstill (Maximum £32,757).</p>		
<p>4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme</p>		
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The TMSA claim to be operating throughout Scotland and that may be true of the Young Trad touring programme, but their current branch structure is slightly more limited geographically.</p> <p>1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place? Essentially centred around the activities of their branches with the exception of the Young Trad Tour.</p> <p>1.2 Where will the audience come from? See above.</p>		
<p>Head of Department's overall priority recommendation</p>		<p>LOW</p>
<p>Head of Department's signature:</p>		<p>Date: 14 February 2008 Revised 25 March 2008</p>
<p>Print name:</p>	<p>Ian Smith</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: Weak overall fit with FXO criteria in the context of a highly competitive funding round. Not recommended for support.		
Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation		LOW
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: Agreed with Stage 3 recommendation, acknowledging that this area of activity remains strategically significant and is being addressed through a number of other initiatives and organisations, as noted in Head of Dept's assessment comments.		
Directors recommendations to Joint Board		LOW
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 agrees with the Stage 4 recommendation.		
Joint Board Final Decision		REFUSE
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	£

End of Assessment