

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

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| Applicant name: | Lyth Arts Centre | |
| Application Reference number: | G201001006 | |
| Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2) | £25000 | £26000 |
| 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: LAC is a small scale arts centre in rural Caithness with a well established professional programme of performances which has a strong following in the area. The venue consists of a small scale performance space (capacity c70) which can be rearranged to provide an exhibition space, a further exhibition space and café area, and a comfortable accommodation block for visiting artists.</p> <p>The application meets our criteria for flexibly funded organisations 2009-2011 in that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it focuses on providing positive experiences for artists in its programme as well as for audiences. The programme is innovative – eg programming new touring theatre, and music programme and in this respect, LAC stands out from other venues of a similar scale; and, • It has a dynamic approach to engaging with the public. <p>Given its small size and limited funding LAC has a big impact in a rural area where the arts infrastructure is very poor. LAC has a strong artistic vision and clearly identifiable approach to programming and is committed to supporting artists. It provides opportunities for people in isolated communities, and in a fairly under-resourced part of Scotland, opportunity to see top quality performing arts work.</p> <p>Future plans are not clearly articulated in the application and clear marketing and audience development plans together with outline programmes for the years in question would have helped give confidence that the venue would remain as successful as currently.</p> <p>The venue provides a very good role model for thoughtful programming for other rural venues of a similar scale, often run by volunteers to look at. In addition LAC seeks to ensure that artists are central to programming, as well as audience development.</p> <p>I do have concerns as to the sustainability of the venue post 2011, given that it is planned to continue activity within current resources as this relies on the continued in kind support of the Treasurer who acts as Artistic Director unpaid. If awarded I recommend that this be conditional upon the development of a succession plan for the venue following 2011.</p> <p>The application assumes additional project funding. If awarded, I would recommend that the grant should be increased by £6K for both 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 to include additional project funding. This recommendation is made on the basis of LAC's impact as an arts centre ('punching above its weight' given its small size), its fit with our criteria for flexibly funded organisations and its geographic location.</p> | | |

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| Officer's overall priority recommendation | | MEDIUM |
| Lead Officer signature: | | Date: 24 January 2008 Revised; 26 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:

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 comments:

From the application and the supporting material, **Lyth Arts Centre (LAC)** appears to know its market and is programming safely to meet current demands. The programme did not set out to challenge the current audience. The application itself is very vague and the main body of the business plan lacking in detail (running to only three pages). The panel recognised that this has been prepared by a group of people trying to keep the organisation going on a voluntary basis, and it is difficult to be clear about artistic vision in these circumstances. The panel also recognised that Lyth Arts Centre is in a strategic position geographically and is an important tourist resource and there is a clear need for such a centre in the locality. The panel felt, however, that there is a need for it to implement its vision and leadership in a consistent way.

Within the criteria for flexible funding, the panel rated this application as low 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:

LAC is an established performing arts venue and the only dedicated space of its kind in Caithness. Since 2004 LAC has included a well appointed and comfortable residential block which indicates the organisation's ethos of supporting artists and is also establishing its visual arts programme. LAC was previously a core funded organisation and since April 2007 has been in receipt of flexible funding.

1. *Fit with FXO criteria:*

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

The Assessing Officer notes the strengths of Lyth Arts Centre's considered approach to artistic programming and partnerships with visiting companies, from her prior knowledge of the organisation. However, the application contained little information on the approach to artistic programming and has not sufficiently demonstrated excellence in artistic vision or a distinctive leadership role.

1.2 *Improving your engagement with the public:*

The application from Lyth Arts Centre meets the criteria of public engagement and has established itself as an important venue for touring theatre companies and music in an area with limited arts provision.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management:

Lyth Arts Centre is an organisation with charitable status governed by an Executive Committee. The management is the responsibility of the Treasurer who works as Artistic Director, on a voluntary basis, supported by part-time staff. There are concerns about the long-term sustainability of this model of operation.

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

The Lyth Arts Centre's articulation of their commitment to equalities has focused on access issues with the venue.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%:

Lyth Arts Centre has met the matched funding requirement.

2. Fit with Departmental priorities:

The proposed programme expands across artforms but has not clearly demonstrated the Cross Art form priority for the development of collaborative working and artistic practice which crosses artform boundaries.

3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims:

LAC contributes to the Scottish Arts Council's aim 2; *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 Specialist Advisor panel and rate this application as a **low** priority for support within the context of Flexible funding.

The Assessing Office and the Specialist Advisors panel note the strategic importance of LAC in a rural area where the arts infrastructure is very poor and the opportunity it provides for this community to have access to high quality performing arts work. The Assessing officer recognises the organisation's artistic vision and clearly identifiable approach to programming and to supporting artists. However, the Specialist Advisors panel did not feel that this was demonstrated effectively in the application.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating:

The application has not demonstrated that the criteria for flexible funding, particularly in artistic excellence and leadership, have been met.

1.3 Strengths of application:

- impacts in a rural area where the arts infrastructure is very limited
- valuable venue for touring companies who would be unable to perform in this area without the Lyth
- strong community engagement.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications:

- future plans are not clearly articulated in the application which makes it difficult to demonstrate that the organisation has met the criteria for flexible funding
- Sustainability of organisation.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application:

The current management model of the organisation is not sustainable in the long-term.

1.6 Development areas identified:

Lyth Arts Centre is valuable within the fragile arts infrastructure in Caithness, but in order to grow rather than simply survive, the organisation needs to radically change the way it operates and to maximise partnerships. I strongly recommend that we work with LAC on a development plan for the future. Given the resources of artist accommodation at the centre, a strategic partnership with a performance company could be part of this, as well as support in organisational development.

1.7 Recommended level of support:

Flexible funding is not recommended, however recommendations on future support are noted above.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place?

Lyth Arts Centre is near Wick, within the Caithness area of the Highlands.

1.2 Where will the audience come from?

The organisation has not indicated in the application from where they anticipate the audience coming although it would be expected that it would be primarily from the locality of the venue.

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| Head of Department's overall priority recommendation | | LOW |
| Head of Department's signature: | | Date: 14 February 2008 Revised: 26 March 2008 |
| Print name: | Anita Clark | |

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| 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 | | |
| Chair of Meeting signature: | | Date: 2 April 2008 |
| Print name: | Iain Munro | |

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| 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 |
| Acting Chief Executive signature: | | Date:10 April 2008 |
| Print name: | Jim Tough | |

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| 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