

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Out of the Blue Art & Education Trust	
Application Reference number:	G201001040	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£149,761	£146,280
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>The applicant is Out of the Blue (OOTB), a community, cultural and arts development organisation that provides studios, marketplaces, promotion and production of cultural and creative project, events as well as advice and support to other cultural space generator organisations.</p> <p>The application meets 3 of the stated criteria namely engagement with the public, widening access and the 'reach' of the work. It also contributes to the cross artform and, in part, the visual arts departmental priorities with a possibility that other departmental priorities could be met once individual projects are developed.</p> <p>OOTB is a community arts resource that has developed greatly since its inception. The information provided shows a mature approach to working strategically with key stakeholders to benefit the public through the use of artistic activities. OOTB have demonstrated a genuine and committed approach to engaging with the public. The proposed programme has been developed to consolidate and extend their activities to provide direct engagement with the public through artist developed projects the business plan is not strong in terms of artistic vision and there is a lack of detail to provide assurances of quality. There are no details of personnel responsible for running activities and whilst the Associated Artist Scheme has criteria set for applicants the details of the selection panel are not included. In addition, there are no full job descriptions for the two new posts to outline the skills and experience required.</p> <p>The business plan clearly sets the context and OOTB fully understand their target participants but, while including activities not applied for, it does not include all details of the financial and managerial operations of OOTB. There is a lack of financial clarity over income generated (studio rentals, café) and its reinvestment which does not provide clear assurances over viability particularly as the majority of partnership funding is from their own resources. Members of staff are listed but not their remits or a staffing structure which results in an unclear management path. The budget has been detailed but does need further exploration to clarify in-kind costs and overheads.</p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong approach to engagement with public - successful development of a culturally based community recourse - provides platform for cross artform development <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of assurances of artistic quality - lack of clarity over income and management 		

Officer's overall priority recommendation		MEDIUM
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 30 Jan 08 Revised: 20 March 08
Print name:	Anne Petrie	

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:

They panel recognised that **Out of the Blue (OOTB)** and the Drill Hall building is a valuable facility for artists and that some elements of the programme are strong. The application articulates ambition as a centre of excellence for community based arts and artists and the panel recognise that it serves the artistic community well. The also noted that the organisation has retained the same enthusiastic and hard-working staff. The panel recognised that the organisation is at a critical point in the development of the Drill Hall however, and considered the overall artistic vision articulated in the application and business plan unclear and lacking a focused approach to development. The panel had concerns around the strength of the partnership with associate artists as proposed and although they consider the philosophy strong, the strategy for public engagement is unclear.

The panel consider this application to be a medium 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:

OOTB is a community, cultural and arts development organisation in Edinburgh that provides studios, marketplaces, promotion and production of cultural and creative project, events as well as advice and support to other cultural organisations.

1. Fit with FXO criteria:

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

The application from OOTB does not clearly demonstrate excellent artistic vision or a leadership role. The responsive approach to artist development which is part of the ethos of the organisation means that there is not a focused artistic policy leading the organisation and defining the programme.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public:

OOTB's vision is rooted in community engagement and the proposed programme reflects this approach with the public impact likely to be high.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management:

OOTB is a limited company with charitable status. The organisation is governed by a small board of four and an experienced staff team. The Assessing Officer notes a lack of clarity on reporting structures and the financial planning demonstrated in the application.

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

OOTB has an Equal Opportunities policy in place and state that equality of access and social justice has been at the heart of their activities since its inception.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%:

OOTB has met the matched funding requirement, although it should be noted that this is all from OOTB own's resources both cash and 'in-kind' and the Assessing Officer notes that clarification is required in this.

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:

OOTB in its aims and through the proposed programme of work contributes across the Scottish Arts Council's aims, and particularly Aim 1, 'to support artists to fulfill their creative and business potential'.

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 the Specialist Advisor panel that this application is a **medium** priority for support.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating:

The rating reflects the applications fit with the criteria and the development areas noted in the assessment.

1.3 Strengths of application:

- OOTB provides valuable resource through its facilities for the artist community in Edinburgh.
- application and business plan asserts a strong commitment to community development and engagement through the arts.
- OOTB has a track record in increasing participation and inclusion.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications:

- artistic vision is unclear and lacks a focused approach to development
- little information of the role the organisation has in the city, what it considers to be its distinctive place or of the partnerships it has/ is developing. There is a considerable arts infrastructure in the city and it is a weakness in this application that OOTB's role within that and particularly how they work alongside other visual and performing arts organisations, is not articulated more.
- concerns within the financial planning and viability as partnership funding is dependent on the organisations own resources from trading.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application:

Scottish Arts Council is being approached as the sole public funded for this development and there is no commitment from the local authority, or indication that their support has been sought for this proposal. The financial planning is particularly high risk as the majority of partnership funding is

dependent on the organisations own resources from trading, and there is a lack of clarity on 'in-kind' support. It has not been evidenced in the application if these targets are achievable.

1.6 Development areas identified:

Development areas identified include distinctive artistic direction and demonstration of partnerships within the city.

1.7 Recommended level of support:

Flexible funding is not recommended.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place?

OOTB is based in Edinburgh

1.2 Where will the audience come from?

In the application OOTB states that 80% of its audiences come from the city.

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

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: Some fit with FXO criteria but relatively weak in comparison to others, in the context of a highly competitive funding round. Not recommended for support.		
Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation		Low 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.		
Directors recommendations to Joint Board		Low Medium
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		REFUSE
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	

End of Assessment