

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Sense Scotland	
Application Reference number:	G201001086	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£150,000	£180,000
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>		
<p>Comments: The applicant is Sense Scotland (SS), a charity and organisation limited by guarantee. The application is towards supporting of the arts programme of the Arts and Wellbeing department (SSAW).</p> <p>SSAW supports disabled children and adults, particularly individuals with complex communication needs to access the arts and cultural activity through a specialised cross-artform programme in participation, as audience members and as artists. Their activity is Scotland-wide but is concentrated in the central belt, particularly the West and focuses on Visual Arts, and Music.</p> <p>The applicant has identified two main areas of focus for the programme in 2009-11: participation and audience related programming. The proposal aims to maintain and expand the range of current participation activity and services, and provide wider geographic spread to work in currently under resourced regions. Primarily this will be achieved through the increase in number of contracted Arts Practitioners and hours of existing staff, which will ensure that each region has at least one Visual Arts and one Music Arts Practitioner and will allow the development of new programmes which appear to be focused in the West of Scotland Area and at the TouchBase.</p> <p>The application directly contributes to 3 of the stated FXO criteria by demonstrating, <i>artistic vision and leadership</i> and in relation to <i>supporting artists to fulfil their creative and business potential</i>, a <i>commitment to continually improving engagement with the public</i>, and in the commitment to <i>widening access to services</i>.</p> <p>The Finance Compliance Officer has rated the project LOW in risk and HIGH in value for money.</p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A leading organisation in their field • No concerns relating to artistic quality and quality of provision • Focus on increasing participation • Focus on education and outreach activities • Good collaborative and partnership working • Strong implementation of and commitment to widening equality of access • Strategically significant in relation to equalities and the work of Equalities Department • Schemes for training and learning <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of detail in proposed programme • Lack of detail in proposed budget 		

- Unclear how the two interrelate
- Plans for expansion are ambitious and lack specific detail
- Some areas of weakness relating to governance

It is felt that the proposal is of HIGH strategic importance in the area of equalities, but due to a number of identified developmental areas, and concerns relating to its ambitious nature, the priority recommendation is MEDIUM. MM comments that, '*While I recognise the aim to extend arts provision across the country, I would recommend focus on artform provision in the two years of funding applied for, and not a general expansion of artform and geographic provision*'. And for this reason it is there is the potential that funding at a reduced level could be considered - to deliver a more focussed programme or a phased approach to the proposed expansion.

Officer's overall priority recommendation		MEDIUM
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 31 January 2008 Revised: 20 March 2008
Print name:	Amy Wilson	

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:

The business planning approach in this application from **Sense Scotland Arts and Wellbeing (SSAW)** is strong, with long term development a clear priority for the organisation. The application clearly articulated the impact of their work both with practitioners and participants. The panel recognised that the organisation's work is developing out of an obvious need for this specialist area of work. There are strong links with other disability arts organisations and the advisors would encourage Sense Scotland to widen this to other arts organisations. The panel were impressed with the strong vibrant ideas in the programme and that the organisation is aspiring to have an artistic leadership role and national remit.

The panel rated this application as a 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:

The applicant is Sense Scotland (SS), a national charity and the application is towards support of the arts programme of the Arts and Wellbeing department (SSAW). SSAW supports disabled children and adults, particularly individuals with complex communication needs, to access the arts and cultural activity through a specialised cross-artform programme in participation, as audience members and as artists. The programme is pre-dominantly Visual Arts and Music, but also Drama, Woodcraft and Storytelling.

1. *Fit with FXO criteria:*

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

Sense Scotland has demonstrated *excellent artistic leadership in the field of arts and disability* through the application and the proposed plan of work.

1.2 *Improving your engagement with the public:*

Sense Scotland has demonstrated engagement with the public, providing opportunities for a sector of the community often marginalised from arts activity

1.3 *Good practice in the governance and management:*

Sense Scotland is a national charity governed by a Board (Scottish National Council) comprising of up to 12 Trustees. As the application is specifically for the arts programme, there is outlined a plan to develop an arts steering group, to involve disabled artists, partners and other stakeholders, to assist in the realisation of the artistic vision and maintain quality. SS follows a number of financial/reporting procedures as expected from a registered charity and has a strong history of fundraising.

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

The work of SSAW is strategically significant to arts and disability, and through training and support for other organisations is committed to widening access for people who have complex needs in the arts. The new TouchBase resource centre is a fully accessible facility.

1.5 *Raising other income at least 25%:*

Sense Scotland 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:*

SSAW contributes significantly 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 Assessing Officer in rating this application as **medium** priority for support.

The Assessing Officer and the Specialist Advisor panel recognise the strategic importance of the work of SSAW in creating opportunities in the arts for a vulnerable and often excluded community within society. SSAW has demonstrated that it is an innovative organisation, taking imaginative approaches to engagement and is aspiring to demonstrate artistic leadership role in the sector. The organisation meets the criteria for flexible funding, but with the development areas highlighted I rate the application as medium priority for support.

1.2 *Reasons for assessing at this rating:*

I concur with the assessment that SSAW is of high strategic importance and is demonstrating strong artistic leadership in the field, but there are number of identified development areas and my rating reflects this.

1.3 Strengths of application:

- Meets criteria for flexible funding
- Strategically important organisation in arts and disability
- Strong leadership role in arts and disability
- Strong approach to engagement and widening access to the arts.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications:

There are some weaknesses in the application in terms of lack of detail in relation to the proposed budget and programme of expansion. Plans for expansion are ambitious but would benefit from a more considered, strategic approach to ensure that the high quality work is maintained.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application:

The organisation aspires to great expansion and development in its programme at a rapid rate. I concur with the Assessing Officer and Head of Equalities in recommending a more staged and structured development approach to its growth, believing that this would sustain the organisation in the longer-term.

1.6 Development areas identified:

A stronger strategic focus to development of the programme based on consolidation and steady growth. If supported I recommend that a revised budget and programme of work is sought, which reflects a more focused approach to consolidation and development.

1.7 Recommended level of support:

Within the context of competition for funds and the comments above on a more focused approach to development, if this application is supported I would recommend that it is at a maximum level of £50,000 in 2009/10.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place?

Sense Scotland Arts and Wellbeing is based in Glasgow and works across a number of areas of Scotland. In the application form, they have indicated activity taking place in 18 local authority areas but with a focus in the central belt.

1.2 Where will the audience come from?

The anticipated audience spread indicated in the application, reflects the geographic spread of the activity.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation

MEDIUM

Head of Department's signature:

Print name:

Anita Clark

Date: 15 February 2008
Revised: 26 March 2008

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: £50,000 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: £50,000 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	£50,000 annually

End of Assessment