

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Stellar Quines	
Application Reference number:	G201001028	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£175,986	£220,929
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: SQ's programme will build on its demonstrable track record for creating high quality engaging work while supporting the development of new writing, women theatre practitioners and audiences. Its geographic reach is wide, including to remote rural areas and its target audiences are achievable. There are no details provided on projected numbers of artists supported. SQ's business plan clearly articulates its vision and an ambition to build on past success while developing new audiences and expanding its activities (numerically and artform practice.) It details how it will meet its objectives to deliver quality productions, mentor and support new talent and act as the voice of women's theatre in Scotland, with quantitative and qualitative measures of success. There is a demonstrable commitment to access and audience engagement and developing new ways of marketing its work. It is clear how the proposed programme will be managed and there is a thorough SWOT analysis. Its Equal Opportunities policy which covers employment and an ambition that staff, Board and audiences should feel a sense of ownership of the company and its work.</p> <p>SQ's programme meets the fund criteria well apart from the 25% partnership income requirement (see below.) Two of its productions meet the drama department's priority of outdoor performance (site specific) – but given that its programme is presented as a choice between productions it is possible that neither of these would be produced between 2009-11. However SQ budgetary assumptions in the application under Q16 suggest its preferred option is to produce one site specific piece. There are ongoing international partnerships and potential for international presentation (some supported by flexible funding, some not.)</p> <p>The budgets cover all of the different production possibilities. These are mostly reasonably costed but there are issues with unacceptably low contingency levels, and achieving fund criteria of 25% partnership income and clarification required regarding salaries (see Q's 12,13,15,18.) If this application is successful it would entail SQ revising its budgets to address these issues.</p> <p>There are development areas regarding fundraising strategy, marketing strategy (which SQ has identified) and budgeting.</p> <p>SQ is projecting increases of 24% and 25% respectively in 2009/10 and 2010/11. This will enable it to increase from one production p/a to three over two years and its Rehearsal Room programmes and subsequently the amount of artists it can support and develop and to increase its staff. SQ is currently understaffed and to be fully effective requires <i>some</i> staff expansion.</p> <p>I would recommend this for support but do not necessarily at the rate requested. I would recommend increased support to at least allow some staff expansion and to ensure appropriate salaries are paid to staff. NB If the award is significantly less than requested this could</p>		

adversely affect SQ's ability to increase its outputs as planned.

Officer's overall priority recommendation

HIGH

Lead Officer signature:

Date: 01/02/2008

Revised: 20/3/08

Print name:

Jaine Lumsden

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:

Attendees:

David Taylor, Co-Director of Arts

Specialist Advisors: Stewart Ennis, Tim Licata, David Leddy, Alex Patience, Sandy Maxwell, Stephen Slater, Stephen Stenning and Laura Tyrrell

The Panel identified the following strengths and weaknesses of: Stellar Quines

The application appeared to be focused and was easy to read. The programme was clearly detailed. The artistic programme seems interesting and the applicant was clear about the artistic vision behind it. The process for developing work was thought to be strong and the SAs welcomed the fact that the company retained the option to drop things if they are not working and try something else. This was likely to improve quality.

SAs noted that this was the only applicant in Drama that focussed on work for and by women. It was thought that the company had strong audience support outwith the central belt.

Specialist Advisors overall rating: 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:

Stellar Quines (SQ) is a well established (1993) theatre company that was formed to facilitate the creative work of women in Scottish theatre, in collaboration with men who share this vision. It supports and develops female practitioners across all theatre disciplines and has a demonstrable commitment to the development of new writing and to audience development. Its SQ's creative process is open and actively encourages the contribution of everybody involved. This in turn leads to a sense of ownership of the final production or rehearsed reading and likely higher quality. Its work is of consistently high quality apart from one production that was not critically well received, and SQ tours across a wide geographic spread. It has recently further developed international links and has undergone a company re-structure.

SQ's aims are to

- consolidate its position at the forefront of theatre opportunities for women
- produce high quality theatre which is of relevance to men, women, diverse ethnic, geographic and social backgrounds and those with disabilities
- create theatre that takes account of evolving theatre practice and through collaboration
- develop sustainable growth for be a model of best practice
- maintain and enhance financial stability
- make its work available to as wide an audience as possible and to develop new and younger audiences
- continue developing relationships with venues/promoters
- develop national, cross border and international collaborations
- open its creative processes as a key resource for audience development
- expand ticket sales and build membership of the company

1. *Fit with FXO criteria:*

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

It has a leadership role in that it champions work by and for women. It also has an innovative and successful method of developing new work, and keeps its options open on what work to take to full production. It has a good record of working in partnership with other theatre organisations. Artists working with the company have opportunities to work overseas (e.g. Romania).

1.2 *Improving your engagement with the public*

The applicant has a good track record in touring work widely across the country.

1.3 *Good practice in the governance and management*

As noted in the Assessing Officer's report the company is under-resourced currently in terms of management staff. Nevertheless the company has managed its finances well.

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

Practical implementation relates primarily to ensuring equality in relation to gender issues. The company indicates that it seeks to play in accessible venues.

1.5 *Raising other income at least 25%*

Not met in year two by a very small margin.

2. *Fit with Departmental priorities*

Two of its productions meet the drama department's priority of outdoor performance (site specific) – but given that its programme is presented as a choice between productions it is possible that neither of these would be produced between 2009-11.

3. *Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims*

The applicant has a demonstrable commitment to the development of new writing (supporting artists) and to audience development and tours across a wide geographic area (increasing participation).

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*

Both the assessing officer and the SAs rated this as a high priority for support and I concur.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating

There was a good response to the company's artistic method and this was felt to support high quality work. The company focuses on work for and by women and this is unique within the Scottish theatre sector. It has a good track record of producing quality work and of collaborating with a number of artistic partners as well as with venues.

1.3 Strengths of application

The main strength lies in the quality of the work and the care taken over the development of the work. The geographical spread for work that seeks to challenge artistically and from a social point of view is also welcome.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications

The percentage requested from SAC is marginally too high.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application

There is a risk that the management structure is not sufficient to make the company successful.

1.6 Development areas identified

Proportion of SAC funding. Management support.

1.7 Recommended level of support

£150,000 in year one and £175,000 in year two.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

A good spread of touring to 15 local authority areas, including two island groups. This represents good coverage of the country for work that is innovative.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation

HIGH

Head of Department's signature:

Print name:

David Taylor

Date: 15 Feb 2008

Revised: 25 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: Strong overall fit with FXO criteria. The amount reflects the competitive funding context and assessment recommendation. Support of £150,000 annually is proposed.		
Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation		High
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. Support of £150,000 annually is proposed.		
Directors recommendations to Joint Board		High
Acting Chief Executive signature:		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		APPROVE
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	£150,000

End of Assessment