

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Voluntary Arts Scotland	
Application Reference number:	G20070581	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£80,000	£80,000
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</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>Voluntary Arts Scotland's (VAS) is part of the Voluntary Arts Network (VAN) the development agency for voluntary arts across the UK and Northern Ireland whose aim is to <i>'promote participation in the arts and crafts'</i>.</p> <p>This is an unusual application in so far as the organisation applying for support does not directly deliver any arts activity, but its value in the voluntary arts sector is significant. Supporting the voluntary arts at a national level is a key priority of the Scottish Arts Council Corporate Plan for 2007-09 in creating opportunities for participation in the arts in Scotland. VAS's work in this sector is a vital component of this.</p> <p>As previously discussed VAS will not directly deliver education and outreach activities however through their main activities of advocacy, active engagement, information delivery, research, and capacity building will empower voluntary arts organisations and give them the necessary tools to do this will be doing so by proxy.</p> <p>Voluntary Arts Scotland does not produce a programme of artistic activities but works to support those who do, particularly on a voluntary basis. It is VAS's intention to provide the sector with 'Support for artists/artistic development/professional training'.</p> <p>Whilst the application does not directly reflect the criteria for flexible funding through the work that VAS will do in Advocacy, Active engagement, Information delivery, Research, and Capacity in relation to voluntary arts organisations and by presenting a 'voice' for the voluntary arts sector the opportunity to develop artistic leadership, and public engagement, through the empowerment and capacity building of voluntary arts organisations is hugely beneficial.</p> <p>The opportunity to develop an ongoing partnership between SAC and VAS would demonstrate a recognition of the value of the work in this sector and the importance of the voluntary sector to the delivery of arts in culture of Scotland. However care would need to be taken that were a greater partnership developed with the Scottish Arts Council that this would need to be developed in more detail to differentiate the new activity from VAS's current work.</p> <p>The Business plan is very comprehensive and exhaustive in its information. There are some assumptions on which the success of the plan depends, for example, the Big Lottery funding as already indicated above.</p> <p>Without the addition of this funding it is hard to see what 'added value' the Scottish Arts Council's increase in funding to the organisation would allow beyond bolstering their core activity. However even to make enough pf a contribution to the ongoing stability of the organisation to allow it to continue</p>		

the good work it already does by allowing for full time staff to be employed to deliver the core activity would in itself be a valuable contribution to the voluntary arts sector.

Strengths

The work that VAS will do in Advocacy, Active engagement, Information delivery, Research, and Capacity in relation to voluntary arts organisations
 Presenting a ‘voice’ for the voluntary arts sector the opportunity to develop artistic leadership, and public engagement, through the empowerment and capacity building of voluntary arts organisations.
 The opportunity to develop an ongoing partnership between SAC and VAS would demonstrate a recognition of the value of the work in this sector and the importance of the voluntary sector to the delivery of arts in culture of Scotland.

Weaknesses

The projected significant increase in activity is dependent on Big Lottery funding support.
 Were a greater partnership developed with the Scottish Arts Council that this would need to be developed in more detail to differentiate the new activity from VAS’s current work.

Supporting the *voluntary arts at a national level* is a key priority of the Scottish Arts Council Corporate Plan for 2007-09 in creating opportunities for participation in the arts in Scotland. VAS’s work in this sector is a vital component of this. In summary I feel that this project should be supported in view of the important, strategic role that VAS plays in supporting the voluntary arts sector in Scotland and the work of VAS in the empowerment and capacity building of voluntary arts organisations. Overall I rate this as a **medium** priority for funding

Officer’s overall priority recommendation		MEDIUM
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 25/01/08 Revised 20/3/08
Print name:	Andrew D Leitch	

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:

Voluntary Arts Scotland (VAS) is a strategically important organisation. The panel felt that the application did not adequately express the value of Voluntary Arts Scotland to the sector in terms of providing advocacy and information. In the section about how they evaluate their progress, more information about their relationship with arts organisations would have been helpful, as would the inclusion of evidence about how they are challenging their sector to improve the quality of the arts and the arts experience. It was recognised that the organisation is delivering for its constituents but it was not clear how inspiring or imaginative the approach is. Panel members' experience of Voluntary Arts Scotland was positive with the example of their informative and well-pitched email bulletins being cited. The content of the application did not adequately articulate their strengths and the forward plan did not sufficiently build on these strengths strategically.

The panel rated the application as 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:

VAS is part of the Voluntary Arts Network (VAN) the development agency for voluntary arts across the UK and Northern Ireland whose aim is to *'promote participation in the arts and crafts'*. It has been in receipt of managed project funding from Scottish Arts Council. VAS is not a producer so in assessing it against the Scottish Arts Council aims and the Flexible Funding criteria, it is from the perspective of *'its role in supporting artists or arts organisation achieve this'*.

1. Fit with FXO criteria:

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

VAS's application has not strongly advocated its role in supporting voluntary arts providers to achieve *'excellent artistic vision and leadership'*.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public

The application meets the criteria in terms of *'engagement with the public'*. VAS provides information, advice and training and aims to promote participation in the arts and crafts by supporting the development of the voluntary arts sector to increase the opportunities for people to take part and provides a voice for the cultural voluntary sector. This is a distinct role within the arts sector in Scotland

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management

The Voluntary Arts Scotland committee oversees the strategic direction of Voluntary Arts Scotland and works with the Executive Officer to take forward the agreed actions. The Executive Officer is line managed and supported by the Chief Executive Officer of Voluntary Arts Network. The committee also report to the Voluntary Arts Network Board through the Board papers and Voluntary Arts

Scotland Chair sitting on the Board. VAS's committee is elected from the sector and so provides a valuable link to art and craft practice and local feedback.

1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access

VAS has an Equal Opportunities policy and identifies a number of projects which are seeking to widen access. To expand on their commitment, Voluntary Arts Network has recently set up a Diversity Panel to look at the broader reach of this area in their work.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%:

VAS has met the matched funding requirement.

2. Fit with Departmental priorities

The work of VAS is not artform specific.

3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims

VAS contributes significantly to the Scottish Arts Council Aim 2; 'to increase participation in the arts'. Its programme of services is not artform specific. As noted by the Assessing Officer, supporting the *voluntary arts at a national level* is a key priority of the Scottish Arts Council Corporate Plan for 2007-09 in creating opportunities for participation in the arts in Scotland. VAS's work in this sector is an important component of this.

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 Specialist Advisor panel and rate this application as a medium priority for support.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating:

The rating reflects the meet with the criteria, the important role that VAS plays within the voluntary arts sector in Scotland and the development areas identified.

1.3 Strengths of application:

- strategic role that VAS plays in supporting the voluntary arts sector in Scotland
- clear demonstration that through its information and advisory services, VAS promotes wide participation in the arts and supports voluntary arts organisations as they encourage public participation
- work of VAS in the empowerment and capacity building of voluntary arts organisations.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications:

- VAS's role in supporting voluntary arts organisations to achieve excellence in their artistic vision and leadership could be strengthened.
- Future plans could have demonstrated more imaginative approaches, and the business plan did not articulate sufficiently how future plans would strategically build on the organisation's current strengths.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application:

VAS are seeking a significant up-lift in funding, however the significant increase in the activity proposed is largely dependent on an application to the Big Lottery Fund.

1.6 Development areas identified:

VAS has the potential to play a more vital leadership role by challenging the voluntary arts sector to improve the quality of the arts and the arts experience. Evaluation would be strengthened by the inclusion of more information on their relationship with arts organisations and evidence of the impact of their engagement.

1.7 Recommended level of support:

Given the high competition for flexible funding, if this application is supported I would recommend it is at a similar level as currently or a modest increase to enable them to strengthen staffing resource.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place?

Voluntary Arts Scotland is based in Edinburgh and works throughout Scotland.

1.2 Where will the audience come from?

As a service organisation, VAS does not directly engage audiences in the arts, however, the impact of their services impacts throughout Scotland.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation

MEDIUM

Head of Department's signature:

Print name:

Anita Clark

Date: 14 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: 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: Agreed with Stage 3 recommendation and comment. The future relationship with the voluntary arts sector needs to be reviewed.		
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