

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Cappella Nova Limited	
Application Reference number:	G201001069	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£44,436	£47,715

Officer's recommendation

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

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

Comments:

The programme proposed is artistically ambitious, with a number of high profile commissions. The company continues to achieve recording deals with major labels and has also established some international performances and exchanges. There is a high commitment to a variety of outreach work to benefit amateur singers and disadvantaged communities in Scotland – although more details are needed in order to make a full assessment of this, including the capacity to carry out the work and more information on partnerships. For a small company with limited management/administration resources, the programme proposed is probably of a manageable size.

The business plan is clear, although I have recommended support to develop a stronger Equalities policy supported by board representation. My reason for an overall medium rating is due to needing more information on capacity to deliver outreach work – which is key to developing increased and wider audiences - consideration for wider marketing plans, and some question over consistent performance standards. More budgetary detail would also be welcome.

Officer's overall priority recommendation

MEDIUM

Lead Officer signature:

Print name:

Tamsin Mendelsohn

Date: 30 January 2008
Revised 20 March 2008

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?

The panel consisted of Murray Buchanan, Paul Bream, Jim Gaitens, Rachel Nelken and Susan Nickalls, with ratings received from Marie Fielding by email.

Comments:

- The panel felt that the application was conservative yet solid, and although it demonstrated good value for money, with not much uplift of funding requested, the application showed a lack of ambition.
- Cappella Nova is an organisation with a strong reputation associated with contemporary composers.
- Not enough information about evaluation was included in the application.
- The panel had concerns about consistency in recent performance standards, as per recent evaluations and press comments and also and felt that this was reflected in audience numbers.
- The panel felt that the organisation would benefit greatly from professional business advice (for marketing, etc.) evident in their business plan and lead officer's comments.

The panel rated the importance of the application being supported as **Medium to Low**.

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:

Cappella Nova is now more competently engaging in a more competitive element of funding having been a core-funded organisation. They are now much more confident as an ensemble and are playing an active role in the Chamber Music Forum. I believe that Cappella Nova can contribute effectively to the departmental priorities, but perhaps need to demonstrate more ambition in their future plans, which as the specialist advisors felt was solid, with a modest request for funding based on their current levels.

I would also agree with the assessing officer that the community and outreach work needs more detail. It is not enough simply to state, in my view, that one of their activities is servicing a Scottish Plainsong Choir of c300 singers when there is little, if any further detail on what that entails for the ensemble and what the "community" benefits in access and participation might be. A stronger equalities policy is also requested.

There is also a perceived imbalance between live performance standards and their recordings, which are felt to be of a consistently high standard.

1. **Fit with FXO criteria:** In Part.

1.1 Excellent artistic vision and leadership; role within sector/support to artists: Cappella Nova certainly occupy a significant place in their niche market and have a firm reputation regarding the choral music of the Renaissance and Baroque periods. They also fulfil a developmental role for singers.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public: A niche market serving a niche audience, who whilst somewhat specialist in their tastes will rarely be in high density of numbers.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management: Solid management and governance with recent help from Arts & Business in board training.

1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access: An area that could improve, particular with regard to expanding audience.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%: Yes.

2. Fit with Departmental priorities: Now Cappella Nova are actively engaged in the Chamber Music Forum, they are contributing to the sector forum development and to the distribution of live music.

3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims: Yes-in particular 1& 2 with a developing education programme centred around vocal training and the well-being of the voice.

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:

Cappella Nova successfully embrace repertoire from the renaissance and baroque with contemporary and commissioned work. They also have a significant recording portfolio.

As already stated, this is a modest application for funding at £44,436 and £47,715 respectively and there is a strong view that their "core" activities should be maintained, but there is little room in the application for significant development, especially in the areas of marketing and promotion and this could have been a good opportunity to address that. I would also want to see that there is a clear distinction between the work of Canty (whilst recognising that this much smaller ensemble is by its very nature more flexible and potentially more commercially exploitable) and of the main group, which is where the bulk of our support is intended.

Cappella Nova really need to expand and develop their audience base and will need support to assist them in this regard. I agree with the assessing officer that clearer equal opportunities policy relating to the equalities agenda would be welcome. We would also want to see the ensemble expand its outreach activities and potentially seek more engagement with YMI, if appropriate.

Cappella Nova has made a significant contribution to the expansion and recognition of the role that the voice plays as an instrument, especially within an ensemble setting and this is recognised by the complete re-prioritisation of the voice within the YMI programme. The music department would want to see them to continue to operate in Scotland, but they must address the consistency of their performance output and develop new audiences for the ensemble. They also need more professional input in marketing and promotion and in seeking more international exposure through touring.

1.1 Application rating: Medium

I agree with both the assessing officer's rating and that of the Specialist Advisors, which was quantified as medium/low. I feel a medium rating is appropriate.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating: Capella Nova have been pre-eminent in their field for some time, but now need to consolidate, move forwards and really compete within their sector and lead again as they once did.

1.3 Strengths of application: The specialist knowledge and expertise within their core repertoire.

1.4 Weaknesses of application: A certain lack of ambition aligned to the need for a stronger identity. A stronger commitment to equalities and more community outreach work.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application: A need for much more effective marketing and promotion and the need to raise performance standards.

1.6 Development areas identified: See under 1.4 and above.

1.7 Recommended level of support: Standstill (Maximum £36,000).

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place? Cappella Nova engages with 12 of the Scottish local authority areas and seek to expand their performance portfolio, both nationally and internationally. Their core activities always include Glasgow and Edinburgh with fewer performances (on average) in other areas of Scotland. They do, however, perform in Aberdeen, Inverness, Brechin, Perth, Dundee and Stirling.

1.2 Where will the audience come from? Not unusually for this type of ensemble, the audience is quite specialist and usually small in number. Cappella Nova must expand their reach and type of audience, including a wider age-range.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation		MEDIUM
Head of Department's signature:		Date: 12 February 2008 Revised 20 March 2008
Print name:	Ian Smith	

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 to merit strong medium priority but relatively lower in comparison to other applications because of the issues identified in the assessment. In a very competitive funding environment with limited funds available, it is not possible to support all strong medium rated applications. Therefore, not recommended for support.		
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, not recommended for support.		
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		REFUSE
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	£

End of Assessment