

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Deveron Arts	
Application Reference number:	G20100182	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£66,601	£71,813
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>		
Comments:		
<p>The applicant is Deveron Arts (DA), a primarily visual arts organisation based in the rural town of Huntly, Aberdeenshire. Since 1996, DA has developed their <i>'the town is the venue'</i> strategy which bases artist residencies of international standard in Huntly to use the town as the context for engaging directly with the public and linking into local concerns.</p> <p>The application meets the criteria for flexible funding and both of the identified Visual Arts priorities. DA has demonstrated their artistic leadership and vision and that their programme will improve engagement with the public. Their programme of participatory arts activity provides potential models for quality rural socially engaged arts practice.</p> <p>Financial history is difficult to assess due to limited information provided however the budget is clear and reasonable. There is a continued requirement for additional fundraising but the organisation has a history of achieving its agreed targets.</p> <p>The governance of the organisation is clear but some elements need further exploration. There is an active relationship with the Board but there are two sub-committees whose uses are not fully illustrated. Alongside this, it is recognised that DA is a very small organisation with a notable risk being the heavy reliance on the Director as the primary driver behind the entire organisation. Flexible funding would result in an increase in staff time but there are questions whether this would be adequate to cover the programme that is proposed. This could be countered by a phased approach to programme development.</p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - international quality arts programme in rural location - Good LA links - engagement fully rooted in artistic programme - potential model for national and international dissemination <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - heavy reliance on Director - initial and planned capacity - continued need to fundraise for project activity 		

Officer's overall priority recommendation		MEDIUM
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 11 Jan 08 Revised: 20 March 2008
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 Alastair Snow, Helen Monaghan, Stephen Beddoe, Kirstie Skinner and Maureen Finn
The panel commented:

Proposal meets the Scottish Arts Council, flexible funding and department aims well.

Artistic vision and leadership – Medium; Advisors found the vision refreshing but noted the need for curatorial rigour in researching and developing projects. The rationale for programming decisions appeared a little inconsistent. Advisors endorse the approach to supporting professional development for the Director through exchange and mentoring.

Public engagement – Medium; Advisors welcomed the strength of the intentions and thought there was good potential to develop this aspect. Perhaps a focus on fewer projects could ensure deeper and longer term engagement.

Overall rating – Medium; with a view to encouraging a sharper and more critical focus by undertaking fewer projects. Support for paced development to ensure quality and sustainability over time.

Development needs – Potential risk in relation to programme being driven by the Director and therefore a need for the Board to establish stronger ownership of plans; enabling more time for reflection and critical evaluation; ensuring wide community engagement, ownership and participation so that benefits are built up and sustained over time.

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:

Fit with FXO criteria

Vision and leadership/role within sector/support to artists

Deveron Arts has established a programme that is strongly located within the local community but that is informed by, and reflects, international developments in the visual arts. The residency programme offers good opportunities to artists at different stages in their career, from Scotland, the UK and elsewhere. A key strength of the programme is a commitment to developing critically/socially engaged practice.

Engagement with the public/support for increasing participation/learning

The programme of Deveron Arts is rooted in engaging with the people of the town and its environs. The “town is the venue” strategy is articulated clearly and previous projects demonstrate a genuine commitment to participative arts programming. Education and outreach are an integral aspect of the curatorial vision and projects are designed to reflect local concerns and issues. Rigour in research and selection of projects might enable more meaningful engagement over time. Profiling and dissemination of the programme is being strengthened.

Good practice in governance and management

The Board is effective although it needs to consider its role in relation to the staff team as there is a heavy reliance on the Director to originate and drive the programme forward.

Equal Opportunities/widening access

Deveron Arts evidences through its programme a strong commitment to ensuring inclusion across all aspects of its programme.

Other income of at least 25%

Budgets indicate this has been addressed.

Fit with Departmental priorities

The ambitions of the programme as outlined meet the Department’s aims: to develop opportunities that support artists and to encourage the promotion of nationally and internationally significant work.

Fit with Scottish Arts Council’s Aims

As described above the organisation meets the aims of SAC in supporting artists, increasing participation and furthering opportunities in the arts through education.

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

Medium Rating – the application meets the FXO criteria and the Department’s priorities but there are some aspects that require further consideration/development.

Strengths of application: strong track record; clear and imaginative vision; excellent potential to continue to increase engagement in the arts through the programme

Weaknesses of application: the organisation needs to build in more time for evaluation and reflection; the pace of the programme could be reviewed to ensure maximum benefit from projects for both the artists and the audiences/participants.

Potential risks and suggested development areas: there is a heavy reliance on the Director to originate and drive the programme and the organisation’s development. The development areas are

to build in time for reflection and to pace the programme to consider doing fewer projects in the course of the year, to allocate time to research to maintain curatorial rigour and ambition, Board training.

Recommended level of support: £50,000

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

The programme is centred around the town of Huntly in Aberdeenshire and audiences are mainly drawn from the town and local area although arts professionals from Scotland attend key events.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation

MEDIUM

Head of Department's signature:

Print name:

Amanda Catto

Date:15/3/08

Revised: 26/3/08

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. Support is not recommended within the available budget.		
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