

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	North Edinburgh Arts	
Application Reference number:	G201001083	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£157,000	£158,500
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 North Edinburgh Arts (NEA), an independent arts charity responsible for the management and operation of a multi-use arts centre based in the Muirhouse area of North Edinburgh.</p> <p>In 2007 the organisation found itself in serious financial difficulties, with expenditure outstripping available funding. Closure was only averted by significant financial support from both SAC and CEC. These difficulties have necessitated a radical rethink of all aspects of how the organisation operates and how it may be able to deliver its aims and objectives in the future.</p> <p>The draft Business Plan included with the application, which will be implemented in April 2008, introduces a new operating model that will result in a major shift in emphasis for NEA, from a stand alone arts centre producing and delivering largely its own programme to an organisation that works primarily in partnership with others to become more of a facilitator between other art organisations and the local community.</p> <p>At this point in time, it is difficult to say how successful the new approach will be.</p> <p>NEA are seen as an important arts organisation that has in the past, and will hopefully in the future deliver an important service to what is a deprived area of Edinburgh. The ongoing financial support of the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) is clear evidence of their importance to the city. They have also delivered successfully on projects such as Starcatcher, as well as developing a good record on youth theatre. However they are currently going through such a radical process of a change that it would be an unacceptably high risk for SAC to support them via Flexible Funding at this time.</p>		
Officer's overall priority recommendation		LOW
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 10 January 2008 Revised: 20 March 2008
Print name:	Sandy Blair	

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:

North Edinburgh Arts (NAE) is going through a challenging time but the panel recognised that it has the potential to be a valuable resource for the area and a good venue for small scale touring work. However, the panel considered that the application did not demonstrate strong integration in the local community. The panel recognised that the Early Years programme is very strong and making significant impact. The business plan is a high risk as the planned partnerships are outwith the control of the organisation and as yet untested. The panel noted from the application form that it had been prepared by the previous Director who is no longer with the organisation and there was concern that the management set up is not well evolved due to this recent staff turnover. The panel considered that the organisation's artistic vision and ability to implement it is not currently strong enough to fulfil criteria for flexible funding.

The panel rated the application as low 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 North Edinburgh Arts (NEA), an independent arts charity responsible for the management and operation of a multi-use arts centre based in the Muirhouse area of North Edinburgh. After serious financial difficulties in 2007, closure was only averted by significant financial support from both SAC and CEC. From this a radical rethink of all aspects of how the organisation operates has resulted in a new operating model which forms the basis of this application. There will be a major shift in emphasis for NEA, from a stand alone arts centre producing and delivering largely its own programme to an organisation that works primarily in partnership with others to become more of a facilitator between other art organisations and the local community.

1. *Fit with FXO criteria:*

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

The application has not sufficiently demonstrated excellence in artistic leadership.

1.2 *Improving your engagement with the public*

NEA could provide an important resource for public engagement in within a deprived community often marginalised from arts activity, however at this stage, the plans are untested.

1.3 *Good practice in the governance and management*

NEA is a limited company with charitable status. The organisation faced serious financial difficulties in 2007 and the application proposes a new operational model but as yet this is untested.

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

NEA refer to their Equal Opportunities Policy, but this has not been included as part of the application.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%

NEA 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

NEA has the potential to contribute across the Scottish Arts Council's aims, but the plans in the application are as yet untested.

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 the Specialist Advisor panel that this application is a **low** priority for support.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating

The plans set out for the organisation in the application are untested and the application has not demonstrated that it has met the criteria for flexible funding. I would concur with the Assessing officer that it would be an unacceptably high risk for SAC to support them via Flexible Funding at this time.

1.3 Strengths of application

- NEA has the potential be an important arts organisation at the heart of a deprived area of Edinburgh
- Innovative early years programme.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications

- Flexible funding criteria not met
- Organisational model untested
- Weak financial track record

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application

As above.

1.6 Development areas identified

As above.

1.7 Recommended level of support

Support is not recommended.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments:

1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place?

NEA is based in Muirhouse in North Edinburgh.

1.2 Where will the audience come from?

In the application NEA estimate that 85% of their audiences come from Edinburgh with 10% from throughout Scotland and 5% from outwith Scotland.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation

LOW

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: Weak overall fit with FXO criteria in the context of a highly competitive funding round. Not recommended for support.		
Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation		LOW
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.		
Directors recommendations to Joint Board		LOW
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 agrees with the Stage 4 recommendation.		
Joint Board Final Decision		REFUSE
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	£

End of Assessment