

## FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

<b>Applicant name:</b>	North East Arts Touring (NEAT)	
<b>Application Reference number:</b>	L201001081	
<b>Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)</b>	£65000	£70000
<b>Officer's recommendation</b>		
<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><b>Comments:</b></p> <p>The proposal is to continue developing the network for professional touring theatre and dance in the North East of Scotland and is a priority for us in terms of unique touring potential to rural communities – eg NEAT aims to shorten maximum travel times to events and recent developments include bringing Angus area into the NEAT fold and this is an area with very little investment in innovative professional programming. The support NEAT offers is meaningful and relevant to its membership. Increased funding is requested to enable NEAT to increase the number of performances it supports from 170 to 250/275 and the number of education and outreach events from 15 to 45/55. It would also host 6 annual networking events for promoters and venues throughout the North East. In 2009/11 it is planned to have 50-60 member promoters promoting between 4 and 20 productions per year and geographic spread taken into account so that 95% of pop will be within 20 minutes of a venue. NEAT is in the process of appointing a new Coordinator which it has sufficient funding in place to support in a full time capacity for one year only. The future success of the organisation will of course be dependent on the new Coordinator however it should be noted that a Management Committee of 3 Committee members oversees NEAT and is closely involved. This Management Committee will ensure that there is a smooth transition to new Coordinator and involves three skilled individuals – 2 arts development officers and an experienced freelance.</p> <p>In order to maximise attendance and ensure work is accessible to all NEAT has a policy of keeping ticket prices low. Whilst this is understandable keeping ticket prices artificially low can compromise the value attached to the arts. NEAT could consider other pricing policies and might be informed by the current Scottish Arts Council funded Pricing the Arts work. NEAT should speak to our Audience and Organisational Development Department regarding this. NEAT has an equalities plan however it is not clear what the status of this is and a clear action plan to accompany this would be useful. NEAT ensures that work by inclusive companies is properly represented in the programme however it there is no mention as to how it reflects culturally diverse work.</p> <p>The organisation aims to ensure that work presented is consistently high quality and is seeking to continue developing programmes for children and young people, its dance programme (not specifically mentioned in this application however) and activity in Angus and as such I would recommend supporting the costs of a full time coordinator plus part time administrative assistant and marketing assistant. The proposal also includes plans to appoint a shared audience development post in collaboration with partners however I would recommend that this is not viewed as such a high priority at this time. The reason for this is that the proposal is not fully developed and it may be premature to commit funding to at this time.</p> <p>In view of this I recommend that the request for £65K/£70K be awarded at a level of £61,250/£66,250.</p>		
<b>Officer's overall priority recommendation</b>		<b>MEDIUM</b>
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 24 January 2008
Print name:	Gillian Shaw	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?

### 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

*Sandy Maxwell was involved with the application but had now left the employ of NEAT. Sandy left the room to enable the discussion of the application to take place.*

The Panel identified the following strengths and weaknesses of NEAT:

While it was difficult to make a judgment on artistic quality, the organisation's track record was strong and it fulfilled an important function. It would be very difficult to sustain regular touring if there was not a NEAT touring in the north east.

Weakness in application – there did not appear to be a strong thrust to programme a higher calibre of work. There was scope for greater programme development involving greater risk.

SAs thought that NEAT should be encouraged to progress programme development and take risks. The continuation of a programme coordinator was thought to be important as a means of encouraging programme development by the venues and to provide a resource to inform them about programme choices available.

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:

North East Arts Touring (NEAT) operates like a rural touring network and supports promoters and venues (mainly voluntary) in Moray, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen. NEAT is a membership body and is funded by Scottish Arts Council and Moray, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Councils. In 2008/09 Angus Council is also contributing to NEAT and it is planned that NEAT will help develop more innovative professional theatre programming in venues in Angus including the recently refurbished Webster Theatre in Arbroath.

NEAT provides support to promoters through direct programming of theatre and dance, through operating a guarantee against loss (GAL) scheme to encourage more experimental programming, by providing marketing and programming advice and support and convening and hosting regular network forums.

1. *Fit with FXO criteria:*

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

The primary function of NEAT is to present work. The vision and leadership can be seen in a regional context as important, although there is scope for greater ambition in terms of programme content.

### *1.2 Improving your engagement with the public*

This is NEAT's primary aim to provide work to communities that are remote from urban centres and without NEAT's service would receive little in the way of professional work. Attendance is high, predicted at 17,000 and 18,000 respectively for 2008/09 and 2009/10. The plan includes the appointment of a part time Marketing Assistant which is likely to increase attendances and audience engagement. In 2008/09 Angus Council is also contributing to NEAT thus extending the range of people who will benefit from NEAT's work.

### *1.3 Good practice in the governance and management*

There is a large Board made up of the membership, but a small experienced committee manages the business. The post of coordinator is vacant and being recruited.

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

There is an equalities plan however it is not clear what the status of this is and a clear action plan to accompany this would be useful.

### *1.5 Raising other income at least 25%*

Met.

### *2. Fit with Departmental priorities*

Some fit with Drama priority of work for children, as NEAT regularly programmes work for this age group.

### *3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims*

NEAT provides an important coordinating role for small scale performing arts touring in the North East. This enables work to reach geographic area that might otherwise be neglected, so there is a very good fit with the aim of increasing participation. The fit with enabling artists to fulfil their potential and arts at the heart of learning is not strong.

**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*

The officer's assessment and the Specialist Advisors view both recognised the organisation's role in enabling access to a range of work for rural and semi-rural communities in this area. The Assessing Officer rated the applications medium and the Specialist Advisors as high.

### *1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating*

I rate the application as medium. While the organisation is strategically important it should be encouraged to expand the range of programme that it offers. This may involve greater support (non-financial) to the promoters.

### *1.3 Strengths of application*

The proposal is extremely valuable in terms of increasing participation and the partnerships are important and long established, with a new partnership with Angus Council in development. The proposal will provide much needed coordination of small to mid scale touring thus providing the benefits of collaboration and avoiding duplication.

*1.4 Weaknesses of applications*

The application does not give enough indication of how the programming range will be developed in order to offer a wider and more challenging choice to audiences.

*1.5 Specific risks associated with the application*

The appointment of the new Coordinator is a risk area, although this is mitigated by the experience of the committee.

*1.6 Development areas identified*

Programming range and development of equalities in relation to BME communities.

*1.7 Recommended level of support*

**£61,250 in year one and £66,250 in year 2.**

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

**Comments:**

The activity of NEAT covers the north East of Scotland and there is a plan to extend the service to Angus.

**Head of Department's overall priority recommendation**

**MEDIUM**

Head of Department's signature:

Print name:

David Taylor

Date: 25 March 2008  
Revised: 26 March 2008

<b>Stage 3: Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) make recommendations to Directors (Acting Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive and Co-Directors of Arts)</b>		
1. Summarise the reasons why the final rating has been made.		
<b>Comments:</b> Good overall fit with FXO criteria. The amount reflects development areas identified, the competitive funding context and assessment recommendation. Suggested level of support: £55,000 annually.		
<b>Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation</b>		Strong medium
Chair of Meeting signature:		Date: 2 April 2008
Print name:	Iain Munro	

<b>Stage 4: Directors make recommendations to Joint Board (strategic fit)</b>		
Record the Directors' recommendation and confirm the suggested level of support. If the recommendation differs from Stage 3, please summarise the reasons why.		
<b>Comments:</b> Agree with Stage 3 recommendation. Suggested level of support: £55,000 annually.		
<b>Directors recommendations to Joint Board</b>		Strong medium
Acting Chief Executive signature:		Date: 10 April 2008
Print name:	Jim Tough	

<b>Stage 5: Joint Board's decisions</b>		
Record the Joint Board's recommendation. If the recommendation differs from Stage 4, please summarise the reasons why.		
<b>Comments:</b> The Joint Board accepts the Stage 4 recommendation.		
<b>Joint Board Final Decision</b>		<b>APPROVE</b>
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	£55,000 annually

**End of Assessment**