

## FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

<b>Applicant name:</b>	Playwrights' Studio Scotland Ltd.	
<b>Application Reference number:</b>		
<b>Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)</b>	£191,000	£191,000
<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  <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>            Although it is a relatively new organisation with limited resources PSS has made a significant contribution as an invaluable resource for developing all aspects of playwriting and encouraging public access to new work.</p> <p>The proposed programme demonstrates an awareness of past successes and an intention to build on these while also initiating new activities. These are set within a sound understanding of the sector's current position, opportunities and challenges, placed within a wider cultural context. The programme is likely to be of high quality (as evidenced by the track records of partner individuals and organisations that work to deliver activities and the feedback from participants.)</p> <p>The application meets the fund criteria well, although there is a problem with the requirement for 25% partnership income (see Q's 11,12,13,14,15 as this is not straightforward) and PSS is projecting support from SAC funds (other than flexible funding) which may not exist and cannot be confirmed. It does not meet either of the drama department priorities.</p> <p>There are some development areas, which might be explained by a lack of information provided, regarding future management responsibilities after staff have expanded and on financial control systems. It is rated as a high financial risk: it had a deficit at the end of 2006/07, but also had accumulated reserves.</p> <p>PSS is projecting a significant uplift from 07/08 grant of £85,000 to £191,000. PSS' current grant is comparatively modest and it has not been able to meet demand for its work and to exploit opportunities on its current resources. In my opinion PSS does require an uplift in its grant to enable it to build and capitalise on its past success and deliver its core activities. It does <b>not</b> require the full amount requested to do this effectively: the proposed additional activities are not essential to this and while it requires more staff it does not need all of the proposed new posts. I would suggest an additional uplift that allowed PSS to expand its staff to a minimum of three full-time and to deliver its core activities, including its play reading service.</p>		
<b>Officer's overall priority recommendation</b>		<b>HIGH</b>
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 30/01/2008 Revised: 20 March 2008
Print name:	Jaine Lumsden	

## 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

The Panel identified the following strengths and weaknesses of: Playwrights Studio

There appears to be a lack of information within application about what the positive outcomes for playwrights were arising from working with the PSS.

SAs questioned, based on their knowledge of the sector, whether there was a risk of duplication of effort between PSS on one hand and the National Theatre of Scotland and Traverse Theatre on the other. The establishment of a Literary Manager at the NTS may indicate some level of competition between PSS and NTS in the area of playwriting development. The SAs did not conclude whether this was the case or not. There also some discussion about whether the developments for individual playwrights would have happened with or without the PSS.

Despite this risk the SAs thought that there were distinctive functions that PSS could provide. SAs thought that there was a need to increase the profile of playwriting in general and that this should be the key role of the PSS. SAs thought that other role PSS ought to focus on is their stated aim of providing the missing link between the playwright and the producers.

It was felt that PSS was good at supporting writers but that some doubt remained about its unique role.

SA's were not supportive of the proposals for an open 'shop front' and café and felt this was not appropriate for the support of professional playwrights.

Specialist Advisors overall rating - Medium

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:

1. *Fit with FXO criteria:*

PSS was established by SAC in response to calls from the sector for better support for professional playwrights. It is unique in that it supports playwrights without a view to developing work for a particular theatre. However the Traverse Theatre and NTS do provide similar forms of support. The key difference is that both the Traverse and NTS will choose whom they work with and that choice will be informed by the outputs that they desire. PSS, therefore, has a wider remit including management of the UK Meyer-Whitworth prize.

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

The applicant's main function in relation to SAC's aims is to aid artists in fulfilling their potential. The application fits well with providing excellent leadership within the sector and in enabling artists to fulfil

their potential.

*1.2 Improving your engagement with the public*

Engagement with the public is indicated through work planned in schools. The applicant also plans to have more 'public-facing' premises.

*1.3 Good practice in the governance and management*

This is a small organisation but appears to be well set-up. There was a deficit in the last full year, but this appears to be covered by a cumulative surplus.

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

There is evidence of the applicant having worked with BME groups and has plans to work with disabled artists. It plans to recruit mentors from diverse groups.

*1.5 Raising other income at least 25%*

Not met.

*2. Fit with Departmental priorities*

No particular fit with Drama priorities.

*3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims*

Meets artistic leadership and support to artists extremely well. Engaging with the audience is indicated as a growth area in the application but advisors judged that not entirely appropriate. However the development of an online script resource would increase engagement with the public. The application meets the education aim well as expansion of engagement with schools and HE is planned.

**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 Assessing Officer rated this application as high and the Specialist Advisors as medium. The Specialist Advisors were not supportive of a different style of public engagement (i.e. the shop-front proposal).

*1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating*

I assess this as a medium rating due to the concerns about the applicant achieving 25% income from sources other than SAC, and its reliance on unspecified other income from SAC.

*1.3 Strengths of application*

The leadership of the applicant is very experienced and knowledgeable and there is a clear vision for supporting and developing playwrights and playwriting.

*1.4 Weaknesses of applications*

There are financial weaknesses in relation to over-reliance on SAC funding.

*1.5 Specific risks associated with the application*

Financial.

*1.6 Development areas identified*

Fundraising from other sources could be developed.

<p>1.7 Recommended level of support £130,000 pa</p>		
<p>4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme</p>		
<p><b>Comments:</b> Geographic impact is stated to occur in 8 local authority areas. The bulk appears to take place in Glasgow and Edinburgh – understandably, as these are the centres for theatrical activity. The geographic spread is reasonable in my view.</p>		
<p><b>Head of Department's overall priority recommendation</b></p>		<p><b>MEDIUM</b></p>
<p>Head of Department's signature:</p>		<p>Date: 15 February 2008 Revised: 26 March 2008</p>
<p>Print name:</p>	<p>David Taylor</p>	

<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: £130,000 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. Directors request that Drama Dep't ensure clarity of role between Playwrights Studio, Traverse Theatre and National Theatre of Scotland in terms of new writing. Suggested level of support: £130,000 annually.		
<b>Directors recommendations to Joint Board</b>		<b>Strong medium</b>
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	£130,000 annually

**End of Assessment**