

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Sounds of Progress	
Application Reference number:	G201001102	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£100,000	£129,000
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>SOP is a dedicated organisation with skills, knowledge and expertise in the area of arts and disability. The company is committed to providing music performance and training opportunities for people with physical, learning and social disabilities. Their plans reflect their aim of providing all individuals involved with opportunities to expand their training and performance opportunities.</p> <p>They are one of a small number of companies working in this field in Scotland and their plans for 2009-11 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop Programme Spotlight- Providing sustained high quality training for instrumentalists and vocalists who need to develop their talents before joining Sounds of Progress supported bands. Limelight- Professional musicians mainly from Sounds of Progress supported bands will produce a quantity of musical material • Productions Touring four new national touring productions <p>The artistic vision of the company is interesting and fits well with its priorities. The artistic collaborators which the company proposes to work with have good reputations and track records.</p> <p>Sounds of Progress have developed some good partnerships in Scotland and plan to further develop their partnerships with local authority, arts organisations and educational establishments.</p> <p>The budget looks reasonable for the proposed activity but there is a significant amount of partnership funding required for both financial years. Sounds of Progress are seeking a significant increase on previous levels of support from Scottish Arts Council and there is a lack of detail on how the proposed expansion will be managed and achieved.</p> <p>Sounds of Progress application and business plan are very general and not specific. This results in a lack of detailed information on artistic programme outline, staffing structure, management of programme and evaluation. While the artistic vision is in place and an outline programme provided, the application is weakened by limited information.</p>		
Officer's overall priority recommendation		MEDIUM
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 31/1/08
Print name:	Robbie McGhee	Revised: 20/3/08

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 information provided in the application was limited and did not strongly evidence Sounds of Progress's own successes, and that previous organisational research carried out was not discussed in detail.
- The panel noted that the organisation had included a new business plan with this application which covered their key areas of engagement.
- The panel noted that the organisation came across through the application as one that had lost its way and was struggling to get itself back on track. The panel felt that the organisation would benefit from a clearer strategy for progressing at this stage in their history, and would benefit from developmental expertise. It was felt that Sounds of Progress needed a much more strategic plan and the panel was hesitant to recommend the application strongly due to a lack of information. The stability of the organisation was also a concern.

The panel rated the importance of the application in being supported as **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:

Sounds of Progress (SOP) operate within the mediums of music and theatre and are a strategically important organisation for the music department within education and outreach and within the important access and participation area. SOP has a very highly rated training agenda and together with Drake is one of the few organisations operating professionally in the arts concentrating on and specialising in the challenging arts and disability sector.

To maintain a strategic priority for SOP in the music department, they now need infrastructural development and support. There is no doubt that SOP fulfils the criteria of developing artist's potential, especially when so many of those artists have severe levels of disability which can be physical, emotional and often related to learning and social skills.

1. Fit with FXO criteria: In part.

1.1 Excellent artistic vision and leadership; role within sector/support to artists: SOP need to consolidate and re-focus on where they want to be in the future as an organisation.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public: SOP is a strategically important organisation to the music department and also engages with drama. Their engagement with the disabled

communities at every level is their key strength.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management: SOP is undertaking a fundamental review of its operation at this time.

1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access: As under 1.2 a key strength of the organisation.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%: Yes, but budgetary information is unclear.

2. Fit with Departmental priorities: In terms of access and participation for disadvantaged groups, of the highest priority. In terms of FXO departmental priorities high on education outreach and training for those who participate in SOP activities.

3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims: Fully meets the second aim.

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:

There is no doubt that SOP are a significant organisation and in many ways their attention to training and CPD is of the highest quality and was commended by both the Specialist Advisor's panel and by the assessing officer (Robbie McGhee).

SOP has applied for a significant increase in funding to £100K and £129K respectively and it is unclear in the application what this additional funding will pay for. It is absolutely clear that SOP need to review their current operation and in that process of consolidation look at how the organisation might move forward. More developmental expertise is required to address the lack of partnership activity and the need to widen the company's portfolio and output. There are too many gaps in the artistic programming and I am confident that a review of their current operation with attention given to the developmental needs for the organisation as a whole will address many of these concerns. There is also little mention of the potential relationship with YMI for the future.

If the organisation is prepared to submit itself to such a process, then funding of £50-60K would be more appropriate.

1.1 Application rating: Medium

Whilst SOP is strategically important as an organisation, they need more focus within and more clarity of direction.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating: Medium is a fair rating in my view when considering all comments and the direction that SOP may wish to pursue.

1.3 Strengths of application: The engagement with all aspects of disability is exemplary.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications: A lack of secure partnership funding, considering what is needed and a general lack of detail in the business plan, artistic profile, staffing and the necessary evaluation processes. No mention of the potential of further YMI partnership.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application: A lack of strategic direction for the organisation.

<p>1.6 Development areas identified: As above and in the commentary.</p> <p>1.7 Recommended level of support: £60,000 both years.</p>		
<p>4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme</p>		
<p>Comments:</p> <p>1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place? SOP is proposing to work with 14 of the 32 Scottish local authorities and again its training and empowerment agenda is a high priority.</p> <p>1.2 Where will the audience come from? SOP is more about empowering, training and engaging.</p>		
<p>Head of Department's overall priority recommendation</p>		<p>MEDIUM</p>
<p>Head of Department's signature:</p>		<p>Date: 13 February 2008 Revised 25 March 2008</p>
<p>Print name:</p>	<p>Ian Smith</p>	

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: Some fit with FXO criteria but relatively weak in comparison to others, in the context of a highly competitive funding round. Not recommended for support.		
Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation		Low 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.		
Directors recommendations to Joint Board		Low Medium
Acting Chief Executive signature:	Jim Tough	Date: 10 April 2008

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