

## FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

<b>Applicant name:</b>	Stills	
<b>Application Reference number:</b>	G201001026	
<b>Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)</b>	£160,000	£164,000
<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</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>		
<b>Comments:</b>		
<p>Stills is an arts centre providing artists' support and critical resources, expertise and profiling in the specialisms of photographic and digital media.</p> <p>In 2007 Stills undertook considerable capital development and upgraded to be a state of the art photography and digital media facility and it is the only provider within the region, making it an important resource. The programme is ambitious and progressive with exhibitions of national and international significance and based on a number of key themes.</p> <p>Stills has local activity and engagement at its core however it also has a number of strategic partnerships which extend the reach of potential users and encourage new audiences.</p> <p>Overall management and staffing is good and the Board is effective however there is some lack of clarity in the financial reporting/management and the business plan states that there may be a deficit in 2007/08 suggesting that the organisation could start from a weak financial position if there is not full recovery in 2008/09. The proposed figures for income generation are unclear and projections may be unrealistic. Further investigation of the budgets and achievable income is recommended.</p> <p>The business plan offers vision and clarity in relation to the forthcoming programme which is innovative and of high quality reflecting the organisations ongoing support for artistic practice. However, aspects related to business growth and income generation would benefit from further scrutiny and consideration.</p>		
<b>Officer's overall priority recommendation</b>		MEDIUM
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 31.01.08 Revised: 31.02.08
Print name:	Marianne Greated	

## 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.

Meets Scottish Arts Council, flexible funding and department aims well.

Artistic vision and leadership – Medium; Programme proposals are strong, support for artist's production is strong, and understanding of the medium is strong. However, lack of clarity and poor use of language in the business plan tends to dilute focus.

Public engagement – High; Advisors welcomed the genuine, considered and evidenced commitment to increased participation.

Overall rating – High; Advisors supported the vision and activity of the organisation but noted that there were weaknesses within the business plan that could impact on business growth/ viability. Advisors had some doubts about the post of Engagement Manager and thought that Stills might wish to reconsider this.

While the Advisors rated this a High priority they identified the following development needs:

- To review the business strategy and to pace growth in order to mitigate the risks attached to over reaching capacity.
- To consolidate activity and to reconsider staffing needs to ensure long term success.

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*

Based in Edinburgh Stills offers a range of opportunities for artists in the City and beyond to research, develop and present new work in photography, video and digital media. The organisation's support for production and commissioning is increasingly important and recent capital investment has helped to ensure that facilities are of the highest standard. The ambition of the exhibitions programme has perhaps been limited by a lack of funding but there is an evident commitment to quality and innovation.

#### *Engagement with the public/support for increasing participation/learning*

Stills is committed to education as integral to all programme development. Through a range of projects and short-term funding the organisation has been successful in diversifying audiences/users and increasing opportunities for non-professional artists. The plan outlines a need for a permanent post that can build on achievements to date, achieving greater consistency across projects and ensuring legacy over the longer term.

*Good practice in governance and management*

The Board meets regularly and is effective in its business. The team is motivated and there is a commitment to continuing professional development. There is a concern that the financial situation is weak and staff and Board are working together to ensure this can be remedied.

*Equal Opportunities/widening access*

Stills has a strong and evident commitment to inclusive practice across its programmes and operation.

*Other income of at least 25%*

Budgets indicate this has been addressed.

***Fit with Departmental priorities***

Stills is an important resource for artists in Edinburgh and beyond. Access to facilities, expertise and peer support encourage artists to explore new avenues in their practice, developing new ideas and ways of making their work. Through careful selection the exhibitions, residency and commissions programme enables some of the most imaginative work to be brought to audiences in Scotland. Through its proposed programme and track record Stills meets 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**

**Application Rating:** Medium, the application meets the FXO criteria and the Department's priorities. However, there are areas that require further consideration / development.

**Strengths of application:** important and effective support to artists; strong and evidenced commitment to increasing participation; track record of quality and ambition in the exhibitions and events programme; effective staff team; good strategic partnerships.

**Weaknesses of application:** use of language in the plan distracts from core purposes; lack of rigorous strategy to achieve financial growth/organisational development.

**Potential risks and suggested development areas:** the main risk concerns the financial health of the organisation in the short, medium and longer term. One aspect of development is for Stills to undertake a review of its business strategy, identifying clearer plans for phased growth and demonstrating that financial risks have been identified / mitigated against.

**Recommended level of support: £150,000**

**4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme**

**Comments:**

Based in Edinburgh, Stills supports artists based in the City and offers opportunities for artists based elsewhere in Scotland to access their facilities / expertise.

The exhibitions programme promotes the work of artists based in the UK and elsewhere.

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

**MEDIUM**

Head of Department's signature:

Print name:

Amanda Catto

Date: 15/02/08  
Revised: 26/03/08

<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. Support of £140,000 annually is proposed.		
<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. Support of £140,000 annually is proposed.		
<b>Directors recommendations to Joint Board</b>		<b>Strong Medium</b>
Acting Chief Executive signature:	Jim Tough	Date: 10 April 2008

<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	£140,000

**End of Assessment**