

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Wee Stories	
Application Reference number:	G201001005	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£160,000	£160,000
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>		
<p>The proposal represents a high calibre programme geared towards giving target audiences quality based interactive experiences. The collaboration with NToS is particularly interesting. WS prioritises intensive development periods which test their work on audiences at early stages as part of their strong commitment to high quality public engagement. WS tours widely in Scotland (and the UK) to reach high numbers of audiences. Given their track record for quality and project delivery the programme outlined will likely be achieved successfully.</p> <p>The lead officer has rated the business plan/financial section a Medium priority given that they have been dealing with a difficult period of financial instability which has resulted in a management change process. However the lead officer is confident that the new structure will improve their ability to deliver their objectives while maintaining a financially solvent situation. The budgets for 09-11 (and plans) reflect WS plan to erase their deficit by the end of 08/09.</p> <p>The proposal fits the Flexible Funding criteria well and fits the Drama Department stated priority (Children/Young People) to a high degree. There is a stated and proven commitment to equal opportunities through the inclusive approach to work creation and audience development.</p>		
Officer's overall priority recommendation		HIGH
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 31 January 2008 Revised: 20 March 2008
Print name:	Angela Hogg	

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: Wee Stories

It was considered that the application did not reflect the strength of the work as experienced by the SAs and as represented in evaluations. The spirit of the artistic vision is not clearly expressed in the application.

The shows that have been detailed in the artistic programme are likely to be of a high standard, e.g. *Treasure Island*. It was thought that there was an appropriate balance of old and new productions.

It was thought that the production *One Small Step* could do with further development.

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:

Wee Stories (WS) is an award winning touring theatre company based in Edinburgh. Their mission is to create a high quality, unique brand of storytelling theatre. Their 2 key aims are to:

- Create exciting, rewarding and stimulating theatre events
- Reach the widest audience in terms of geography and age; reflecting the diversity and multigenerational make-up of society, with children as the key component

1. *Fit with FXO criteria:*

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

Excellence in vision and leadership is well demonstrated - evaluations are universally very positive. The company supports artists in that it is artist-led and tours across the UK and on occasion overseas thus providing exposure (support) to artists.

1.2 *Improving your engagement with the public*

The company has high attendance levels and the work engages very effectively with the target audience of children.

1.3 *Good practice in the governance and management*

The company currently has a deficit, but the Board took action to address this and it is expected this will be reduced to zero by the end of 2008/09. The Board have demonstrated that they can tackle difficult issues. The management is a little inexperienced in running the administration of the company. This is a result of staff reduction in order to address the deficit situation.

<p>1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access The applicant takes good practical steps to widen access: accessible performances for deaf and hard of hearing audience members, people with visual impairment, outreach activities and events, a newsletter in a variety of formats, website W3C accessible.</p> <p>1.5 Raising other income at least 25% Met</p> <p>2. Fit with Departmental priorities Excellent fit with Drama priority for work for children.</p> <p>3. Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims Fits extremely well in fulfilling artists' potential, and also putting arts at the heart of education. Similarly with increasing participation (projects attendance of 28,000 in years one and 16,000 in year two).</p>		
<p>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)</p>		
<p>Comments</p> <p>1.1 Application rating 1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating Both the SAs and the assessing officer praised the company's work but both felt that the application did not fully express the company's strengths. Both rated the application as High. I agree based on the strengths and weaknesses, below.</p> <p>1.3 Strengths of application Very strong artistic work of an international standard, excellent engagement with the audience, very good fit with Drama priorities and SAC aims.</p> <p>1.4 Weaknesses of applications Current deficit situation and apparently some lack of capacity in administration evidence by the presentation of the application.</p> <p>1.5 Specific risks associated with the application Possible lack of administrative capacity.</p> <p>1.6 Development areas identified Administrative capacity (this should be addressed following the elimination of the deficit by end of 2008/09)</p> <p>1.7 Recommended level of support £ 160,000 pa</p>		
<p>4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme</p>		
<p>Comments: Good geographical spread in 22 local authority areas, including Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders, which do not receive a high level of arts provision.</p>		
<p>Head of Department's overall priority recommendation</p>		<p>HIGH</p>
<p>Head of Department's signature:</p>		<p>Date: 15 Feb 2008 Revised: 26 March 2008</p>
<p>Print name:</p>	<p>David Taylor</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: Good overall fit with FXO criteria. The amount reflects development areas identified, the competitive funding context and assessment recommendation. Support of £160,000 annually is proposed.		
Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation		Strong 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. Condition of grant that Directors should be satisfied with progress over six months to end October 08. With reference to Head of Dept's summary Section 3. 1.6. Support of £160,000 annually is proposed.		
Directors recommendations to Joint Board		Strong 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		APPROVE
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	£160,000

End of Assessment