

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY

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What are the main challenges for artist and the freelancers in obtaining funding in Scotland.

The main challenges for artist and freelancers is finding the balance between looking after their basic needs e.g. rents, food, bills, life/family commitments etc. and funding the production of their art form e.g. access to time, rent and materials (artistic & marketing) while finding the time to create and produced and launch their art. Often this juggling of competing commitments produces sacrifices and compromises.

However individual artist/freelance artist, are also often running as sole traders, with all the annual costs and commitment (financial and legal), including paper work. They are often in competition with fully funded and staffed companies and business.

Into this mix, over 40% of the artistic population are neuro-diverse, e.g. with specific learning difficulties, Dyslexia, ADHD etc. This is a high percentage of the artistic population considering they make up only 10% of the overall general population. There is a combination of factors which have an accumulative effect on artists' ability to deal with an extended bureaucratic process, including a poor experience of formal education and bodies. These affected artists are most likely to be sole traders already struggling with the paper work required to maintain their artistic business. Indeed, administration and funding applications are often their weakest skill and might very well have contributed to why they are artists!

However currently it seems little is done to accommodate these factors in the funding process. This can result in.

- A lack of confidence in the formal application process and their ability to overcome the hurdles it creates.
- A lack of confidence in a funding process which is only accessible via written paper work.
- Perceived lack of formal qualifications in their practice. Being judged as artists on their application, not their experience, intentions and results.
- Loss of intellectual property and projects.
- Financial burden & costs incurred by hiring additional administrative support to try and create parity with others, which cannot be recouped
- Difficulty in identifying which funding is best for the project, which subsequently requires more time and effort resulting in additional stress.
- ADHD and Dyslexic people often use kinetic and visual styles of learning which is not catered for in the process.
- The bureaucratic process appears to favour the academically proficient applications rather than the applications which might produce the best work. It often appears that

the same applicants are repeatedly successful without producing valuable work, which leads artists to lose faith in the process and in Creative Scotland itself

- Those with learning difficulties often feel excluded from the general artistic communities, a situation amplified when they seem destined to continually fail in the application process.
- The applications themselves are usually overly bureaucratic and seem to demand esoteric knowledge of application technique and language which is completely unrelated to their artistic experience and abilities.
- Many artists have issues with mental health, and this can especially apply to those with learning difficulties. The application process which is so unsuitable for their abilities can often contribute to a worsening of these mental health issues.

Solutions might include

- A much better understanding and knowledge of funding staff on how these issues impact artists in their day to day practice
- A dedicated weekly/monthly open surgery where freelance artists, can get face to face guidance and support through the application process.
- Offering scribe/administration services and/or include it as a legitimate cost in the funding process.
- Include an oral interview/powerpoint presentation as a possible alternative/supplement in addition into the funding process.
- People with different learning styles often need face to face support to help in understanding the application process, and to correct language and style issues.
- Co-operation with bodies such as Mindroom, to instruct staff in how to best assist those dealing with all types of learning difficulties.
- Realignment of application priorities which are better suited to the work to be produced, rather than an individual's ability to match the language seemingly demanded by the application process.
- Recognition of art as valuable in its own right, and not as a support to government policy.

What factors should be considered and how should decisions be made about which artist or cultural freelancers should obtain public funding in Scotland

With an estimated 40% of the artistic community (Dyslexia Scotland) identified as having specific learning difficulties, e.g. Dyslexia, ADHD etc. (in the general population they make up only 10%) It is vital that staff in the arts are trained and understand how these real difficulties can lead to lack of parity with other artists and a loss of income and progress over years.

A lack of artistic recognition for the work produced and created compounding inequalities experienced, including the loss of intellectual property and projects, leading to economic disadvantages.

It is vital that firstly systems are set up to counter this inequality and bias and lack of parity as some of our greatest artistic talents are being unsupported which is ultimately Scotland's

loss. It is without question that many of Scotland's talented artists do not approach Creative Scotland because the administrative nature of the application process is so unsuited to the way they work. It is instructive that even the structure of this consultation process makes demands of bureaucratic and office-based knowledge that most artists simply do not have.

I would add finally that the sum total of these issues disempower, subordinate and constrain artists in Scotland, rather than enabling them to produce the work which they envision. Overall this structure inhibits artists' ability to be self-sufficient in their career, and involves Creative Scotland taking an overly-powerful editorial role in the production of art, which itself is antithetical to the creation of a vibrant and sustainable artistic culture.