

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM FEDERATION OF SCOTTISH THEATRE

Federation of Scottish Theatre (FST) is the membership body for the professional performing arts in Scotland. Find out more about our work at www.scottishtheatre.org.

Context

Funding for the arts in Scotland comes from many sources. These include central government through a variety of routes including through Creative Scotland; local authority funding; income generation through ticket sales, sales of work, exhibitions, performances etc; private business sponsorship; charitable giving by individuals; charitable funding through trusts and foundations; private subsidy by friends, partners and family members; subsidy through those involved taking paid employment in other sectors. It's vital that any system of public funding for the arts takes account of the full range and balance of funding sources.

Public funding for the arts is relatively small and in decline. Total funding for the arts in Scotland is much less than 1% of the total budget¹. Since 2010, funding in cash for the central government funding including Creative Scotland is expected to increase from £59M to £66M². **That is a real terms cut of £8.3M, or 12.5%**³. Whilst FST members recognise that this is less than the cuts to the budget as a whole and welcome the Scottish Government's support for arts and culture, Creative Scotland's policy of allocating flat cash funding has compounded the reduction. More than two-thirds of our regularly-funded members received the same cash award from Creative Scotland for 2018-21 as they received for 2015-8, and for several this is the same cash amount as their grant in 2010 when Creative Scotland took over responsibility for funding. **This is a real-terms cut of more than 25% in ten years and its impact on sustainability is palpable.**

Local authority funding is under particular threat. Funding for 'Other Culture and Heritage' across the whole of Scotland in 2017-18 was £51M, less than 10% of the total Culture and Leisure budget and less than Creative Scotland's Grant in Aid from Scottish Government⁴. There is a need to think strategically about how local authority funding interacts with other funding sources, and to align funding partnerships around shared values and outcomes.

Funding cuts put pressure on everyone working in the arts. Recent research also highlights the state of pay for individuals in the arts: the Arts Professional survey indicates that both employed and freelance cultural workers are giving more and more of their time

¹ Excluding colleges and universities.

² Source: Scottish Government budget documents

³ Source: Bank of England inflation calculator <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

⁴ Source: Provisional Outturn and Budget Expenditure Statistics [2018](#), Scottish Government June 2018

for free⁵. A Creative Scotland presentation to FST in December 2018 indicated that the sector is producing more and more work with fewer and fewer people. Inevitably, the drop in funding outlined above is leading to greater job insecurity, longer hours and higher workloads to continue to produce high-quality work for the people of Scotland and beyond. In addition to compromising the wellbeing of the whole workforce this has a serious impact on diversity across the sector by limiting opportunity to those who can afford to work for little or no pay.

'We have less money than anyone [in Europe] and we produce a damn sight more than anyone else.'

Sustainability and innovation

Arts in Scotland is an ecosystem in which all parts are inter-dependent. Artists, freelancers and those working in companies and organisations collaborate to make work, and funding models should seek to support that collaboration rather than create or worsen competition for scarce resources. There is no distinction between 'subsidised art' and 'creative industries' – those making work are themselves in creative businesses, whether large or one-person, one of whose income sources may sometimes be central government funding.

Anecdotally, the proportion of freelance workers is increasing and it seems unlikely to be a coincidence that this sits alongside the steep decreases in funding outlined above for the buildings and companies which employ staff permanently as well as on contract bases. Our industry has traditionally sustained a relatively high proportion of freelance workers, but we need to think hard and honestly about when freelance working is the most appropriate approach for the kind of work being made and when it is a consequence of fewer employed roles being available. The decrease in funding also makes sustaining a freelance career more difficult as fewer opportunities are available.

We need to explore more collaborative funding approaches. We would urge the Scottish Government to explore options to support the production and distribution of arts and culture at local level, including match funding. The City of Edinburgh Place Partnership, which involves funds from Scottish Government and the local authority which have to be matched by new private sponsorship, is one model which recognises the interconnections between those working in arts and culture within one area.

We must balance the desire for innovation with recognition of, and ongoing support for, what is already established and delivering. When project funding ends, too often the work has to stop and progress can be reversed. Longer-term funding is crucial, enabling artists and companies to build relationships and trust with communities.

'Our funding is overly weighted to 'the new' and innovation rather than recognising what's actually working.'

⁵ <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/exploitation-rife-unpaid-work-subsidises-arts>

'There's a cost of one-off and short term funding which is under-recognised. Over time, you build things up, you build connections, you build ways of working. If that starts and stops, it's really damaging. The less mobile and the fewer resources the people you're working with have, the more likely it is that the loss of the thing you have leaves you with nothing else.'

Diversity is vital for future sustainability. There is strong commitment to, and evidence of, our members working to ensure that the art they make is diverse and reaching diverse audiences. There is a concurrent need for time, space and resource to allow that to happen effectively. Again, cycles of short-term project funding can work against the development of partnerships with participants and audiences. There is also a need to reflect on what real diversity looks like and how it should be funded in future.

'If we're going to be serious about EDI it will start to change how we make work, who sees our work, how we make work. Just getting an extra year as we continue to manage the decline is less interesting.'

Funding

We have previously stated our priorities for Creative Scotland funding and believe these apply to arts funding more generally:

Clear, artform-specific strategies based on real and inclusive consultation and engagement which includes audiences as well as practitioners, and which support transparent funding decisions. There is a strong drive from FST members to ensure that these strategies are inclusive and genuinely engage with as many people as possible.

'There is a thing about what is it as a nation that we need – how do we manage this to work better for 'us', or how do we manage it better for people not in the room?'

A new approach to long-term funding, which recognises that one size does not fit all, and that putting a large part of the arts and culture sector on notice every three years is not the best means by which to support it. FST members have pointed to models operating in Scotland including repayable loan support and very long term (8-10 year) funding which is profiled to reduce in the final years, encouraging sustainability by providing clarity about the end of the funding and giving time to source new funding. Craft Scotland is piloting a partnership with the Castlemilk Credit Union⁶.

'Longer-term funding is crucial to enable sustainability and dialogue – the promise to our audience. It was very hard to programme whilst we were waiting for the RFO outcome.'

Strategic dialogue with funders to discuss progress and flag issues – 'no surprises' – together with new ways to engage meaningfully with other parts of the sector

'What we've been used to is these cliff-edge moments for the entire sector, which prompts a hiatus.'

⁶ <https://www.craftscotland.org/community/opportunity/craft-flexible-finance>

More involvement of practitioner and sector experience and expertise in both strategy development and decision-making process. We welcome the introduction of peer-led decision-making on the Touring Fund for Theatre and Dance, and believe that this should be the norm.

'People who are not salaried are connected differently with their community. There are people in this room who have many years in working with different communities, there is a very high level of expertise in that. It's a different layer of experience.'

Honest engagement on how to support new entrants to the sector when public funding from all sources is declining in real terms.

There are international models which can serve as examples for Scotland, for instance from Norway⁷ and Sweden⁸ which provide access to employment benefits for freelance workers. A bursary system for freelance workers could be targeted at emerging as well as established artists, providing the time for reflection which is so central to good creative work. Again, there is a variety of established models for such funding, for instance Arts Council England's Developing Your Creative Practice bursaries (£2,000-10,000)⁹, Arts Council of Ireland bursaries (various, ranges from €10,000 – €20,000 per bursary, depending on scheme)¹⁰.

There are also good models of funder engagement already working in Scotland. FST members report that their best experiences of funders are where there is a relatively short initial application which focuses on the alignment of a proposal with outcomes specified by the funder, followed by the development of a positive, long-term funding relationship based on trust and respect for the expertise of both partners.

'We got funding from Paul Hamlyn – you get a quick yes or no. If it's yes, someone in the organisation becomes your advocate, they are rooting for your project. They talk to you. [...] Back and forth, and when you did get the money, you felt it was ok to fail.'

'I've never had questions like that before but these people are good, they know what they're doing. The relationship's been good and open. There's an expertise there, people who can challenge you in a useful way. Great funders.'

Too much reliance on automated systems can be problematic. Whilst some FST members would welcome more online funding systems, others express concern about the likely cost and timescale of public sector IT projects; and others raised significant concerns about accessibility, particularly for those with dyslexia. As above, FST members call for a greater focus on conversations, relationships and trust in future funding systems.

⁷ <https://skuda.no/english>

⁸ <http://teateralliansen.se/teateralliansen-in-english/>

⁹ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/arts-council-development-funds/10-things-you-need-know-about-dycp>

¹⁰ <http://www.artscouncil.ie/available-funding/>