

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM COLLECTIVE

Major threats to sustainable funding for the arts

Collective brings people together to look at, think about and produce contemporary art in a new kind of city observatory.

Established in 1984, Collective has long supported new work by artists who are at a pivotal stage in their development. In November 2018, we opened our new home on Calton Hill, featuring the restored City Observatory, City Dome, and a purpose-built exhibition space. Our programme of exhibitions, walks, and events presents contemporary art in all its diversity. By inspiring, engaging with, and learning from the people and groups around us, we aim to contribute to local, national, and international conversations. Significantly, audiences have grown from 7,000 five years ago to 300,000 this year signally a step change in reach and impact.

The Scottish Government has enshrined the value it places on culture and engagement in it through the National Performance Framework's outcome for culture and additionally in its drafting of the Cultural Strategy. However, core funding to key parts of the cultural infrastructure are vital to support development and there must be potential to increase core funding where development has been agreed with funding agencies. For example, Collective's business plan, developed in close partnership with funding partner Creative Scotland, was predicated on an increase in core subsidy, albeit at a proportionately lower ratio than increases in earned income from our new trading activities. In the last round of RFO funding, CS took the decision to keep all visual arts organisations on standstill funding. This represents a major threat not only to Collective but to the artists we support and to the depth, extent and quality of engagement we offer our diverse communities.

A fully accessible cultural sector needs a foundation of public funding in order to maintain the benefit for society which is open and could be a statutory right of all. This can contribute towards the prevention of stop visual art becoming a shrinking, market driven sector beholden to the taste of a few which is considered an elitist pastime by many, which is the opposite of Collective's vision and mission.

Per head funding for visual art audiences is particularly low in comparison to other art forms, this is a challenge when the quality of engagement needs to be maintained in order to ensure audiences continue to value the unique experience and wellbeing outcomes on offer. Current standstill funding will neither maintain levels of provision nor provide the capacity needed for organisations to meet the increased need to develop other income strands from trading or donations.

Challenges for artists and cultural freelancers in obtaining funding

Collective provides artists with the opportunity to make new work and audiences the chance to see it here first. Every year we develop, produce and present twelve new projects by at least twelve artists to massive audiences. Through year-round support to artists and freelancers we produce work connected to our locality and the people in it as well as developing their skills and ability to access funding elsewhere. Formats of funding applications are not developed with the education and expertise of artist practitioners in mind. Visual artists often work alone and do not have the same access to peer development and organisation that other sectors do. Practitioners' skills and training are not focussed on the written and financial formats needed to apply for funds, especially alongside or in competition with organisations. It is important that artists and organisations work together to develop ambitious, impactful projects and communicate them to as wide an audience as possible.

Measures which the Scottish Government could take to ensure sustainable funding

Collective is known for its work commissioning co-productions between artists and other groups within our locality on topics which are meaningful to their everyday lives and struggles, which are often hard to reach and require trust and consistency. This needs long term funding models which allow for research and development as well as presentation. The most satisfactory programmes for artists, organisations, participants and audiences are those which have been co-produced between multiple partners. Therefore, the core of sustainable funding is a commitment to multi-year programmes.

When identifying the various income streams for culture in other countries philanthropy and donations is an area which is underperforming in the visual arts in Scotland. Measures which promote individual and company giving such as tax breaks for philanthropy could develop this area, however given recent examples we believe this needs to be underwritten with an ethical policy towards receiving private funds to ensure public good continues to be maintained.

Maintaining funding for long term research and development with international partners would also allow organisations to maintain and develop Scotland's connection with the world during current uncertain times.

Possible innovations in attracting greater funding

Collective has just opened our new home on Calton Hill, Edinburgh. It features the restored City Observatory, City Dome international exhibition space, a purpose-built exhibition space for work by emergent artists based in Scotland, a learning hub and new build restaurant which is operated by our restaurant partner Gardeners Cottage. We benefited from a redevelopment led by our vision and mission to make art accessible to all. Capital projects are essential for the support of cultural organisations in making a step change in their

income generation and impacts Collective was the beneficiary of the last round of Creative Scotland Large Capital Project funding in 2013 eventually the organisation levered in five times the funding of the initial award. We believe that Lottery funding should continue to be available for capital projects. Collective's award from a public body was instrumental in building the confidence needed to develop trust in the project and provide a more sustainable model. From experience of these programmes, we advise that a joined-up partnership approach is needed between funders in order that responsibilities for a sustainable future is agreed. In turn this enabled us to employ more artists, art producers and trainees providing a seedbed for artistic production and creative enterprise which now welcomes over 300,000 people per year. This increased capacity should not be seen as a way to decrease public funding, rather as a way to transform the reach and impact of cultural organisations and increase the positive outcomes for both artists and the public together.

Factors which should be considered on how decisions should be made about which artists or cultural freelancers to obtain public funding

Collective deliver over half of its funding directly to artists and freelancers each year as well as offering bespoke support in development of ideas, manufacture and installation with knowledge developed from over thirty years of experience. It should not be forgotten that arts organisations are the main employers of artists both in programme content and general staffing. Collective employs artists through long term work and research and development programmes rather than one off short term outcomes. Every day of the year Collective develops the skills of the artists and freelancers we work with, delivering unparalleled development within a professional context, this is something artists tell us time and again is more valuable than money alone. We support applications for other funds and provide access to co-production networks which all increase artists funding. In this way, the money invested by Collective in artists is multiplied for the benefit of all.