

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM STARCATCHERS

Starcatchers is Scotland's National Arts and Early Years Organisation. We are currently in receipt of Regular Funding from Creative Scotland and have previously been funded through their project funds.

Starcatchers works with artists and cultural freelancers as a core part of our delivery – as a producer-led rather than artist-led organisation. We have evolved to realise the artistic visions of the artists with whom we work and through that create beautiful, exciting, inspiring performances, installations and arts experiences for Scotland's youngest children and the adults who care for them.

Having had a year of Regular Funding Starcatchers is now better placed to understand the positive impact that having consistent funding brings – whilst our award is significantly less than we had applied for, the confirmation of 3 years of funding has allowed us more flexibility with our plans, given more security for us as an organisation and allowed us to work with more artists than we had originally anticipated.

At the same time, our Regular Funding from Creative Scotland only makes up around 30% of our annual turnover and as such we are reliant on making applications to a large number of other bodies to provide us with the resource we need to deliver our programme of work.

We welcome the Committee's inquiry into funding for the arts in Scotland and the potential for a more flexible, innovative approach to arts funding to evolve.

Children's Theatre in Scotland:

Theatre and dance for children and young people is one of Scotland's success stories, but still does not receive the recognition, support and investment it deserves. Scottish theatre and dance for children and young people is in demand internationally and plays to packed houses internationally. In the last year, Starcatchers' production *Hup* was the first production for babies to be presented at the Lincoln Center, New York. This is only one example of a number of highly successful international tours of Scottish children's theatre in the last year alone, however, the sector still struggles to find an audience in Scotland. Our European neighbours recognise the vital importance of funding theatre and dance for young audiences – Denmark has over 70 full-time companies – but Scotland continues to lag behind, despite the fact that the work here is recognised as some of the best in the world.

- **What would a sustainable model of funding look like?**

Starcatchers would advocate for a refreshed model of arts funding in Scotland that has input from both national and local bodies including Scottish Government, Creative Scotland and local authorities.

The arts sector needs confidence from its funders – the commitment to longer-term funding models that allows artists and companies to take risks, experiment and develop inspirational new work for and with our audiences is essential.

Scotland needs a new approach to arts funding that recognises the contribution arts and culture make to our lives and supports the development, creation and dissemination of high-quality work to audiences and communities across the country. We need an approach that is not focused on bureaucracy and reporting but on nurturing our artistic community and the work being made.

We need a funding system that supports both individual artists and organisations. Organisations need to be able to access consistent support whether this is through project funds or through 'regular funding'. Individual artists and cultural freelancers should not be competing for funding against organisations, particularly larger organisations who have resources.

- **How should that funding be made available to artists?**

- Funding for individual artists should be separate from funding for organisations
- Investment made available for R&D as well as creation/dissemination of product
- Recognition that individual artists do not have the same support structure as organisations and therefore adapting evaluation and reporting mechanisms accordingly
- There needs to be understanding that different art-forms have different needs and therefore it might be appropriate to ring-fence funding for particular activity rather than all art-forms competing for the same funding.

- **What are the major threats to sustainable funding of the arts in Scotland?**

The current three-year cycle of regular funding offered by Creative Scotland is not sustainable model and as was seen following the most recent round in 2018, had a major impact on the arts sector as a whole. Organisations are forced into a long application process that forces energy away from other activity or fundraising from other sources and when, after a significant period of waiting for outcomes this is unsuccessful this creates increased fragility for the infrastructure of our sector. This process had an impact on the organisations who were eventually successful in their bids but the ripples were felt by those who were unsuccessful who had to then apply

for other funding to support their work; by venues who were waiting to hear from organisations on the outcome of their funding so public programmes could be completed and by individual artists who work with almost every organisation involved in the process.

There are similar challenges with project funding – organisations and individuals commit significant time and resource, often unpaid to create funding applications which can be turned down for seemingly arbitrary reasons leaving applicants with few options for how to secure other resource to create their work.

Diminishing local authority funding for the arts in recent years is also a threat to sustainable funding. Whilst there is recognition that there is pressure on the public purse, arts provision is often seen to be the first to be cut by local authorities because it is deemed an ‘added extra’ rather than a vital offering for communities.

The introduction of Cultural Trusts in recent years has also had a significant impact on wider arts funding in Scotland. The devolved responsibility of managing these services from local authorities has meant that once well-established support from arts services for artists, organisations and the work they make has been eroded. The priority, particularly with programming theatre, is now whether or not the trust is making money rather than how well it is serving their communities.

- **What are the main challenges for artists and cultural freelancers in obtaining funding in Scotland?**

The challenges for individual artists and cultural freelancers around obtaining funding include:

- The time and resource needed to complete funding applications which takes them away from earning a living – the majority of individual artists have to find the time outside of paid work to write funding bids
- The complexity of funding application process – there is a skill to creating strong funding applications and providing the kind of information that funders are requesting. This is not always a strength of individual artists.
- Limited opportunities for them to access the amount of resource they need to make the work they want to make – small project pots, limited R&D funding, short-term residencies that are under-resourced.

- **What measures could the Scottish Government take to ensure a sustainable level of funding for the arts?**

- Ensure that the role of arts and culture in enriching our society is embedded locally and nationally.
- Ensure that local authorities are protecting cultural provision and investing in the artists and arts organisations working within their communities.
- Move away from over-reporting and bureaucratic approaches to arts funding and delivery – enable the arts sector to tell the positive stories that demonstrate the impact made.

- **How could Scotland be innovative in attracting greater funding for the arts?**
- **How should public money be made available to support artists and cultural freelancers in Scotland, including any relevant international examples of best practice?**

We need to find a more sustainable way to enable artists to make a living in their field. Provision of a stipend or wage when they are between work for example as happens in France would make a positive impact.

There are a number of organisations in Scotland, which act as 'hubs' for individual artists. Starcatchers produces work with artists making work for and with Early Years. In addition to producing the work and supporting the artistic process, we provide support in writing applications, contracting artists, performers and other cultural freelancers, marketing and financial management. Other producing hubs such as Red Bridge Arts are operating on models that provide artists with the support they need. There have also been other examples of producing hubs previously which had some success, yet the funding for these no longer exists and the positive impacts are lost.

- **What factors should be considered and how should decisions be made about which artists or cultural freelancers should obtain public funding in Scotland?**
- Increased use of peer review to inform decision making processes.
- Multi-stage applications so artistic concepts can be fully explored as well as management, finance etc

Any other comments:

It has been noted on some online forums we are members of, that freelance artists are concerned about being able to respond to this call for evidence. Whilst they recognise it is important to do, they are also commenting that completing this call for them is unpaid labour and that it feels quite daunting.

It was felt important to share this feedback with the committee in light of the questions being asked.