

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM TRICKY HAT PRODUCTIONS

Who are we?

Tricky Hat is a small company, a registered charity, that makes theatre with and about people who live on the margins of our society. We work with people to find a creative and credible voice through participation in high quality, collaborative, cross-arts events alongside high calibre artists. We work in collaboration with agencies and artists and communities throughout Scotland from Aberdeenshire to Dumfries & Galloway, and we also work internationally.

In Scotland and internationally we are regarded as an innovative leader working with older people. We run projects with people with mental health issues, carers and young people. We are inspired by their stories and perspectives and aim for their voices and visualisation to reach a wide audience. We make work that has relevance to people's lives and the issues they face.

- **Our Funding**

Over the years, we have received project funds from Creative Scotland, some local authority funding, British Council funding, and from trusts and foundations.

As a small, project funded theatre company we need the agility to respond to partnerships/projects quickly. We do not want to compromise this way of working, but current funding does not support this easily.

We feel that planning 2 years in advance, on a rolling basis, allows us to develop the work we do in response to our evaluation processes and the prospect of new opportunities.

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

It seems that there is a two-tier funding structure - the big/established companies and buildings/venues, and the rest of us – small companies and freelance artists. There appears to be much less funding for the rest of us – and it is increasingly apparent that there is not enough to properly support projects.

Creative Scotland (CS) is the main funder, allocating government funds and (ever diminishing) lottery proceeds. We outline our experience of CS funding applications below:

Regular Funded Organisations

This process does not work for us.

- All our eggs in one basket: We will not apply for this again (unless the process is substantially changed) because it would take all the company's resources for weeks/months to write the application. During that process there is no space to apply for other funds. If unsuccessful we have nothing. We applied for RFO funding the first time round and the experience had strong negative impacts on our artists and threatened to fold the company.
- Bigger companies have a greater capacity to apply. To assess major theatre venues like the Lyceum on an equal basis as Tricky Hat is ridiculous.
- Major venues are similar to national companies which are directly funded by the Scottish Government. Why not just allocate the big theatre buildings, for example, a block of money and let them negotiate so they have to work in partnership with themselves and the communities they live in?
- These venues have clear (but potentially limited) geographic impact when compared to small companies like Tricky Hat that work across Scotland in many deprived communities.

Open Project Funding

- This process is not strategic and appears to be a veritable lottery. CS states that two-year funding is available, but in our experience, this is not the case. It is not easily accessible to artists. It depends on how much money is on the table at the decision-making meetings, and does NOT depend on how good the applications are.
- Continual repeated applications waste our resources (and arguably CS resources!). We develop a two-year programme, partnerships etc, and there is never enough money on the table on the day of the decision-making panel so we may get one year's worth of funding. Repeat. Repeat. We could be using that time to write applications to other funders.
- We are expected to develop strategically, yet have to reintroduce ourselves to CS with every application.
- The application forms are too difficult for most people to write. This kind of form filling is not naturally in an artist's skillset. We pay people to write ours – every year!

- The artistic director wants to have a relationship with CS where she can discuss how we can move forward together. We don't expect CS to give us all the funding we require, but a dialogue - where we can be open and realistic about how to develop the work we do – would be so valuable. So often the system does not appear to support this kind of supportive and developmental relationship with small organisations.
- **How should public money be made available to support artists and cultural freelancers in Scotland?**

Simplified online processes would be welcome. Why do we need to 'register' with CS every time we apply?

Longer term funding would be so beneficial. It would allow strategic developments, and mitigate the wasted resources of repetitive funding applications. It would allow artists to concentrate on their creative processes rather than spending a major part of their time in funding applications.

More joined up approaches would be helpful. Several trusts and foundations appear to work together, but it is not apparent that they are working closely with lottery distributors and several applications often have to be made to different trusts/foundations or lottery funds for the same project.

This also applies to local authorities. Joined up, longer term approaches with CS and other trusts/foundations would be beneficial.

Conclusion

While Tricky Hat welcomes the inclusion of culture in Scotland's national outcomes, we believe that hand in hand with this is a responsibility for government to recognise and properly support the cultural sectors. The importance of the cultural economy / arts, culture and heritage is clear, and innovation through arts and design is often welcomed, but not sufficiently recognised either financially or strategically.

The arts can enhance all sectors, from education to healthcare, and a small percentage of the funds allocated to these areas ringfenced for arts would enhance our health and wellbeing as a nation. A change to the way funds are allocated is desperately needed.

