

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM CRAFT SCOTLAND

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

Within the craft sector, the majority of makers are sole traders, or may not have a formal, recognised business model. They also manage portfolio careers and have other responsibilities which require them to work part-time or as freelancers. They do not have much time to research and make applications for funding, and those that do often find the process disheartening as the competitive environment means that success rates are low. For individuals the size of award is often small but expectations can be high so it can cost makers additional time and money to deliver a funded event or activity. As individuals, they are often not eligible to apply for many awards that are open to organisations. Other funds might be beyond the reach of individuals as they are designed for large projects. Funding applications often don't allow applicants to include realistic working hours and other freelance costs which are involved in the creative process.

We note that in the context of this funding enquiry network organisations have been described as having been in competition with artists in the last RFO funding round. I would like to add some further information to that point. Craft is not as visible as other sectors and therefore it attracts less funding and support and fewer funding or investment opportunities for makers. Our role is to address this by making the case for the value of craft and ensuring the sector's unique features are understood by policy makers, funders and the public.

The craft sector is open and accessible resulting in a diverse community of practitioners, for example makers may not have gone through traditional education routes but may be self-taught. However this can limit the type of opportunity available to makers.

The majority of makers have established small businesses or operate informal business models which because of their size and the creative nature of the work don't qualify for enterprise support or traditional financing. And, as they run businesses they are often ineligible or a lower priority for public and arts funding.

Our role as a national agency is to lever support and funding for the sector which is then passed on to makers through employment opportunities which we have created, active promotion of sales and commissions across different platforms which we organise or arrange access to, free or low cost training and professional development, marketing and promotion of the sector and individual makers.

We carry out research into need and profile the sector so that we can make the case for strategically targeted investment and future support including new and existing models. For example, with Creative Scotland we launched the Craft Flexible Finance scheme providing quick access to small loans for makers. We work with academic institutions to shape research into the sector with the aim of understanding the sector and informing future policy-making.

We work with a range of partners to deliver a cost-effective and equitable spread of funding and support for makers and the communities where they are based.

We believe that more funding should be made available to artists, and that it should be easier to access but feel also that the role of national agencies is an essential one to ensure that sector can continue to develop in the longer-term, to address cohesively the broadest range of interests and to promote and advocate for the sector across a range of platforms.