

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM LITERATURE ALLIANCE SCOTLAND

Literature Alliance Scotland is a membership organisation committed to advancing the interests of Scotland's literature and languages at home and abroad. As Scotland's largest literary network, we bring together writers, publishers, educators, librarians, literature organisations and national cultural bodies, to create a strong, trusted collective voice for literature and languages, which are celebrated locally, nationally and internationally.

What would a sustainable model of funding look like?

One that is consistent and predictable from year to year, and which has a clearly communicated process. Good examples are found in Germany and other European countries, which subsidise excellence in the arts without regard for popularity (e.g. opera).

How should that funding be made available to artists?

- Through institutions (literature organisations, theatres, opera companies, orchestras) for collaborative arts.
- Fellowship / residency schemes for individual artists, writers, etc.
- Grants that support international appearances and travel for established artists.
- Grant processes that are more streamlined and transparent.
- Through income tax breaks (Ireland, for example) and VAT exemptions for legitimate practicing artists.

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

- A society that values money and profit above health and wellbeing of its population – the arts have a role to play in articulating the significant contribution they make to health and wellbeing of the population
- Lack of money generally and other perceived priorities like roads, housing, health.
- Short-term funding timescales. If we want a stable sector better security is needed to enable artists and organisations to plan ahead.
- Poorly articulated arts funding processes leading to poor management of the process and lack of trust by the artists, a negative public environment towards the funding process.

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

- Getting reliable feedback and guidance from funders.
- The time required to prepare funding applications and to administer grants, if successful. It would be far better to put in an outline proposal as stage one and get an initial response and feedback before proceeding to a full application.
- A 'one form fits all' approach to funding that does not accommodate the wide variety of applicants - from large organisations to individual writers and artists - and which

creates huge competition as well as long waiting times. An example is Creative Scotland's Open Project Fund.

- In line with this, there needs to be a radical review of all existing funding streams, application processes and the language used to make them more artist and arts organisation friendly and less competitive.
- The funding organisation needs to have and retain skilled, intelligent staff who can guide artists and cultural freelancers through the process – high staff turnover is a significant problem.

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

- Only 0.2% of Scotland's budget is spent supporting the arts - this needs to increase.
- A stable, predictable commitment of public funding. Perhaps by taxing big corporations and giving them credit as patrons.
- Advocate for the arts to ensure an environment which is supportive of and values the arts and artists, so that investment in the arts is a natural and welcomed activity.
- Ensure a suitable level of stable funding for arts organisations who create programmes and activity with artists, and support artists to reach the general public with their work.
- Ensure arts organisations continue to widen their reach and bring as wide an audience as possible to their programme so that everyone can participate in and enjoy the arts (thereby ensuring funding for the arts is something that touches all lives, all tax payers)
- Create much more attractive tax breaks for arts donors (individuals and businesses).
- Provide funds for schools, prisons, hospitals, nursing homes etc. to spend on arts, as part of their core budgets - providing more work for artists. This means far better integration of health and social care, including arts on prescription.
- Integrate education and the arts.
- More support for practitioners, such as the Irish-style income tax exemptions for legitimate arts producers, including freelancers.
- VAT exemption for legitimate practicing artists and organisations without the need for charitable status.

How could Scotland be innovative in attracting greater funding for the arts?

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- More support for practitioners, such as Irish-style income tax exemptions for legitimate arts producers, including freelancers.
- VAT exemption for legitimate practicing artists and organisations without the need for charitable status.
- Ensure that all major building developments set aside a fixed percentage of the overall spend to support art and artists in the area, to improve quality of life and well-being of existing community through art.

How should public money be made available to support artists and cultural freelancers in Scotland, including any relevant international examples of best practice?

- Public funding is essential; private philanthropy only goes so far. A good example is Germany, although the federal system is different from ours.
- There should be more support for practitioners, such as Irish-style income tax exemptions for legitimate arts producers, including freelancers.
- A funding organisation needs to exist to disperse funds in an even, timely and supportive way (Creative Scotland have information about the way various funding organisations around the world operate – a suitable model can be found and tailored to Scotland’s needs).
- Stable long-term funding of key cultural organisations needs to exist so that they can deliver arts and education programmes that employ artists and bring art into people’s lives across the country.

What factors should be considered and how should decisions be made about which artists or cultural freelancers should obtain public funding in Scotland?

- Excellence rather than popular appeal should be the main criterion.
- A panel of appropriate peer assessors/ reviewers to bring in external expertise to support decision making. This would enable the years of experience within the sector to reflect and influence its future, giving a greater sense of democracy, voice and shared responsibility.
- While having fellow artists decide risks corruption and log-rolling, perhaps panels made up of a mixed constituency of artists, academics, reviewers, etc. would work.
- Look at individual artists, including their levels of dedication and persistence despite obstacles. Each person faces their own hardships - the willingness to persist and continue to make art despite this is important. Consider what financial help they need to create new work of value to community groups or the wider public to further their own progression as an artist, or to break into markets here and abroad. While this is tricky because it is so subjective, sound proposals by artists and a track record showing commitment and quality are part of the answer.
- There needs to be a variety of funding streams to deliver funding to artists and cultural freelancers, and suitable expertise or panels attached to each. Established arts organisations with expertise can play a role in passing on funds to artists (Live Literature Funding is a good example). The process should be benevolent and aimed at supporting as much good work as possible, and the assessment panels/experts should be changed on a regular basis to ensure fresh eyes and insight are brought to the process each time.