

CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ARTS FUNDING INQUIRY

SUBMISSION FROM NEO PRODUCTIONS

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

1. Sufficient funding from the national government and local government levels to maintain activity. This includes maintenance of facilities for cultural activity at an affordable level such as performances and rehearsals. We have identified that at this point in time there is only around £500k of public funding directly targeted at supporting BME activity. Until this amount increases (along with a general rise in funding for the arts in Scotland) a lot of the issues that we talk about in this document will not change.
2. Reliance on lottery funding which is variable depending on people playing the game and dilution of the market through proliferation of lottery games.
3. Volunteer burnout through lack of funding support for the activities for the activities they organise/co-ordinate - especially when their volunteering supports organising the cultural activities in diverse ethnic communities. Also those working on a non-paid or low paid basis to develop the BME creative activity, that does and will, contribute to the diversity of culture in and from Scotland.

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

Challenges come in different ways and from different directions.

For example, Creative Scotland saying they can fund 100% of a project but then giving feedback on unsuccessful bids as lacking other cash support – contradiction between rhetoric and actuality.

Having the time and skills to create and submit funding applications especially when you are unfunded to do it and expected to do it on a voluntary basis. It has been shown that along with working class people, BME people are often disadvantaged in this manner in not having the resources to support them while they try and create a career in the arts. It is not easy (or fair) when you are competing against/being judged at the same level with established organisations that have paid fundraising teams to create their applications.

Established processes creating unintentional exclusions, for example, if you want to be considered by National Theatre of Scotland you have to submit a script to the Playwrights Studio but the Studio does not 'do' musicals so that cuts out that channel. And because music and theatre are one of the key ways African people approach performance, this ends up being a form of indirect discrimination as it denies a diversity of cultural perspectives and approaches in favour of a Westernised version of culture.

Also if you are working in the musical theatre genre there is no specific information readily available for musical theatre of this nature – rates for opera performances are the nearest to them but that genre is different in many ways. Maybe this is something we can help develop a better scale of pay levels as getting pay scales right is important for the budgeting aspect of applications and has been an issue when applying for funding for us as an organisation.

Institutional Racial Bias: An example is the use of the term 'ambition' when feeding back especially on unsuccessful applications. Agencies may not realise how patronising the term 'ambition' can be read within the racial context of arts funding, as it often has the implication that BME people are not allowed to have the same ambitions as mainstream counterparts and are seen as 'over-reaching' themselves.

The unconscious use of 'ambition' often comes with an attitude that BME creativity must conform to white 'standards'. We have met this attitude in the past when being told to align with a 'white' organisation to get ahead. This showed disrespect to the right of people to express their own creativity and the culture they come from. And when we did approach those organisations we did not get the support that particular funding agency seemed to think would be there. This is not surprising from the racist bias perspective, as well as a failure by the funding agency to understand that these organisations have a budget already established around a different artistic vision and approach to creative activity.

Another issue around the use of the term 'ambition' is when looking to apply to agencies such as Creative Scotland, we have then been given the feeling that we should apply for smaller amounts of project funding level as a maximum. This perception that BME organisations and individuals should limit their artistic and creative ambitions to shows that involve one man and his 'djembe' by the resources made available to them has to be challenged. How can we counter the deep-rooted discrimination and disadvantage that is recognised as common across Scotland if equal chances are not given for BME based activity to ask for the amount of funding required to achieve a greater level of quality?

Unfortunately the decision making process of Creative Scotland we experienced earlier last year appeared to continue the institutional bias. They failed to understand that black people's approach to theatre/ performance does not necessarily conform to the Western modes and this is a significant reason that they do not come to the mainstream arts venues. It also means it can cost more to get BME actors/ singers/ performers involved as there is not ready pool working in the arts due to lack of funding!

The reasons given for turning our application down last year reinforced the barriers that have been documented for most BME practitioners including being disadvantaged by not having the financial stability or support to be able to take time out to develop work or do unpaid research. The evidence for this comes from a report: *Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries* April 2018: University of Edinburgh and University of Sheffield with Arts Emergency/Create London, Barbican Centre, & CREATE

<https://www.barbican.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2018-04/Panic-Paper-2018.pdf>

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

A measure the Scottish Government could take is ensuring that all its agencies are actually fulfilling their legal obligations in the areas of Equalities as part of the general duty under the Equality Act 2010, to promote a fair and more equal society and show 'due regard' to:

- *eliminate unlawful discrimination*, harassment and victimisation, as well as other conduct prohibited by the Act
- *advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not*
- *foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*"

and being alert to institutional racism that has been identified in recent reports.

We will say to its credit, our experience after our unsuccessful application last year is that Creative Scotland has now been working to make changes in its approach and putting some funding behind its current Diversity initiatives. Its reports '*Understanding Diversity in the Arts*' and '*Equality Matters*' have also highlighted numerous and complex barriers to access, progression and representation in the arts, screen and creative industries and that career progression is far from a level playing field. They noted recently that "Challenges are more acutely felt by women, people with parental responsibilities, disabled people and those from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Lack of connections, social structures and networks also featured highly as a barrier, with many mentioning the importance of informal networks in securing work or getting noticed."

When they analysed their Regularly Funded Organisation (RFO) programme (examined by the Scottish Parliament committee last year), Creative Scotland found a reduction in the number of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion-led organisations supported through the RFO programme and a reduction in a focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programming. Also, there were no new applications from Equality, Diversity and Inclusion led organisations.

We agree with Creative Scotland's perspective that "equality, diversity and inclusion are crucial to the arts, screen and creative industries if they are to be sustained, refreshed, richer and more dynamic, and release the true potential of creative talent, regardless of people's background." Though, of course, with the current limitations in Creative Scotland's funding they cannot yet commit the amount of resources required to start 'levelling the playing field' but at least they are moving in the right direction. So long-term increased funding is required to help challenge and change the outdated attitudes that do not have a place in Scotland today in any public body.

We also think that a minimum of 1% of the overall Scottish budget be solely allocated to separate cultural budget supporting cultural activity extra to cultural activity being funded by other budget strands – financially backing up the idea of culture being at the heart of Scottish life.

We think that politicians particularly have failed to appreciate that the fragility of the arts and creativity life of Scotland because of other factors such as the amount of tourism driven by cultural activity that appears to not need much money because it 'successfully' operates without much input – such as the Edinburgh summer festivals or the voluntary contribution. But without increased investment to help sustain the current activity and lever in development of excellence in product and experiences, the arts ecology will not survive without more casualties. History shows that resting on one's laurels without nurturing what currently helps Scotland punch above its weight will result in 'system failure'. This is already showing in the number of small scale festivals, events and groups (often rural or specialism based) that are, or close to, failing through lack of what is very small amounts of funding required to keep going. An increase of investment of 1% of the Scottish budget (as a minimum) will be well worth it – especially in the long run.

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

There is a major artistic absence of a visible contribution to Scotland's culture by minority ethnic communities yet there is an interest in such work as the likes of '*The Lion King*'. Presenting a greater diversity of cultural experiences will result in a greater diversity of people 'consuming' and participating. Unfortunately, creation of this type of work from Scottish based ethnic minority artists is very rare, especially as long as major barriers to participation in the arts and theatre for the ethnic minority communities continue to persist.

There could be better support for cultural companies/individuals that want to become profit making get started as there is the possibility of self-financing 'products' being created alongside subsidies for those areas not able to attract a commercial level of income.

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

The idea of universal basic income is an attractive way for artists to be assured of some income whilst pursuing creative practice that could develop into a more sustainable career. It would also make it easier for a greater diversity of people able to consider cultural activity as a career too.

We would look to public money helping supporting the umbrella and development organisations that then support arts and crafts people to develop their activity into career supporting incomes/social enterprises – either partially or fully such as the Cultural Enterprise Office or SENScot.

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

Factors to be considered come from the results of consultation were articulated in the report of the Scottish Government's Cultural Strategy Engagement Report¹ published last year which noted that there should be 'better diversity of artistic 'product' being created and offered' along with issues around 'the affordability of a career in the arts for those in lower socio-economic levels of society' (frequently where black people are) with the current funding system being described by some as 'favouring people with established networks and privileged backgrounds'; and the recent aforementioned '*Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries* which found 'The cultural and creative sector "significantly excludes" those from working class backgrounds, which is in addition to barriers faced by women and people who identify as disabled or Black and minority ethnic (BME)'. *A Culture Strategy for Scotland – Engagement Report* (Full & Summary versions) March 2018: Scottish Government <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/culture-strategy-engagement-report/>

Research published in 2016 by the Equality and Human Rights Commission of Scotland, stated: *"Discrimination and disadvantage are still common across Scotland. We don't all have equal chances in life and some forms of discrimination are deep-rooted."* The arts form a significant cultural part of life in Scotland and are not immune from the general findings of the commission.

Moreover, according to the Scottish Government's Race Equality Framework for Scotland 2016-2030, published in May 2016:

"The rich heritage and history of Scotland is celebrated, studied and debated constantly. In reality, minority ethnic communities and individuals have always been intertwined in that history. However, their stories are seldom shared and often poorly represented. The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that minority ethnic histories are an integral part of Scotland's story. In terms of Black history, this includes acknowledgement of Scotland's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. It also includes exploring how colonialism shaped Scotland both economically and socially, and how the impact of these global events can still be seen in the inequalities faced by minority ethnic communities today.

The whole of Scotland's society should know the broader story of Scotland's history and role in the world in order to create social and cultural equality, and to promote a strong,

pluralistic national identity for Scotland. Community cultural projects such as storytelling, community radio, music festivals and local news stories provide opportunities for sharing a diversity of perspectives and facilitating new shared meanings. More broadly, it is important to encourage a sense of equal ownership for all communities in our national heritage and historic environment, including through greater recognition of the intangible cultural heritage of communities. The Scottish Government strongly believes that Scotland's history and heritage belongs to all Scotland's people.

When it comes to children & young people - the power of theatre and music to influence young minds is well recognised. Scottish youngsters are growing up in a constantly changing world with the country's racial demographic changing yearly through welcoming a diverse group of ethnicities who have chosen to make it their home. Figures from the 2011 census show that the minority ethnic population in Scotland doubled over the decade with the African communities showing six-fold increase -

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/DataGrid/Ethnicity/EthPopMig> It is important that there is cultural activity that seeks to reflect this, educating young people on diverse cultures and stories, broadening their artistic horizons, as reflecting the diversity of the population.

More needs to be done to support projects created and led by members of the black and ethnic minority community. It is very rare for members of this community to get the opportunity to do large scale projects as traditionally what limited resources and funding there is available in Scotland does not generally reach them. Being able to see and take part in more BME work, black and ethnic minority audiences will benefit from exposure to an artistic product that is relevant to them and their experiences. They will feel included in society and feel pride in seeing their stories reflected on Scottish stages, in turn widening their horizons on what theatre can be and it can be for them.

We need to be mindful of the barriers around access for ethnic minorities are considerable especially within the arts which is often considered an 'extra' or 'superfluous' even though cultural activities are actually an essential part of their identities. These include but are not limited to the following:

- The work presented is alienating
- Prices are expensive
- Intimidating environments
- Social isolation

Another factor to take account of is how trends in criteria of public funding can be problematic. For example there is a trend towards funding based around geographic place at the moment. This makes sense if your funding is about building geographic communities, but cultural activity is also often based around communities of interest or in our case, people of particular backgrounds who are not limited to one area of a city or part of the country. This can create an unintended barrier to accessing funding when you are working across different areas particularly when you consider how one of the benefits of cultural activity is about helping see the connections between the different places and not be boxed in by a view within a few miles of your location. For example, we understand Awards for All is now appears to be making decisions based around place-based criteria. This creates a certain assumption about the type of group that might be applying and will potentially preclude a group that wants to work over more than one location to reach more of the people they are trying to reach as they are not based in the same local community.