

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee

Creative Scotland – Regular Funding 2018-21

Written submission from Arika

Arika Overview

Arika is a political arts organisation that explores the connection between art and social change. We do so by creating spaces of collective learning, which bring together world-renowned figures in the arts with grassroots social organisers and activists. We've organised 35 major festivals and projects since 2001, generating over 127,000 attendances.

Our main activities are currently divided between 'Episodes' – leading international political arts events held in Glasgow – and 'Local Organising' – ongoing events planned in collaboration with local groups with which we have sustained relationships.

Views on recent Regular Funding Round

The process of applying for RFO Funding from Creative Scotland requires a long lead in both in terms of the planning required for a 3-year programme and the actual preparations of documents such as the business plan, artistic plan, policies, budget forecasting etc required for the application. We appreciate that 3-year funding provides Arika with stability and therefore the ability to plan longer term. We also acknowledge that applications for this highly competitive fund have to be rigorously and thoroughly worked out. However, we are a very small organization working at stretched capacity (as many arts organisations in Scotland are) and the process of the application can impact on the delivery of our projects. We also feel that the RFO application process can disadvantage smaller artist-led initiatives who have very limited capacities such as Transmission Gallery, whose RFO funding was cut in this round. It is important that Creative Scotland find routes to support and sustain grass-root emergent groups, especially Transmission Gallery, which more than any other organisation in Scotland currently, has pushed towards a de-colonisation of their practice, in which artists of colour both lead the committee and are foregrounded in their programme to a much greater extent than anywhere else in Scotland.

Regular Funding is of great importance to Arika, it is the main source of funding for our core and artistic activities. Funding over a three-year period allows us to advance plan and offers stability. Other funding routes are highly competitive, often do not repeat fund, are short term and often require that funded activities are new rather than an established project or practice. This can make finding sources to support core staffing & running costs challenging, therefore putting a heavy reliance on Creative Scotland RFO funding.

One particular challenge in this RFO funding round was the delayed timing in which Creative Scotland were told their budget by the Scottish Government. The impact was that Creative Scotland were unable to tell arts organisations the outcome of their funding until late into January 2018. RFO funded organisations in the current 2015-

2018 round were funded until the end of March 2018. Not knowing the outcome of our application until two months before the end of the financial year meant it was challenging for us to forward plan and commit to projects. It also provided insecurity for our staff whose jobs are dependent on this funding.

Another challenge is the result of standstill funding. As an RFO, Arika can no longer apply to other funding streams within Creative Scotland, which previously we've been able to do. We asked for £250,000 funding per year to account for the additional funds we have sourced through Creative Scotland, however we were awarded 'standstill' funding of £200,000 per year. In real terms standstill funding is actually a £40-50k cut in our budget. Due to this funding cut plus rising inflation, business and employment costs, we have had to make difficult operational and artistic decisions and are unable to deliver the same level of activities in 2018-2021 as we have in the 2015-2018 funding period. This will result in a reduction in events and activities we can deliver by and with grass roots community groups & individuals who are living through and fighting against varying systemic oppressions.

Whilst we understand that Creative Scotland has extremely difficult decisions to make for heavily over-subscribed funds, we were confused and dismayed at the initial funding outcomes, some of which have since been over-ridden. In particular we were shocked that companies such as Birds of Paradise Theatre, Lung-Ha's, Janice Parker Projects and Transmission Gallery had their funding cut. Creative Scotland has pushed Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) as something that must be embedded in RFO organisations, yet the funding decisions that were made seemed to marginalise companies who are particularly strong in EDI. It was hard to see how such fundamental cuts could be made to some of the organisations practicing the best EDI, which both in their organising and their programme address vital oppressions and justice for oppressed communities, while at the same time other organisations (who do comparatively little) received raised funding.

Within this funding round, there was also the addition of new to RFO organisations who are understood to be "umbrella network groups". Of course, we understand that their work is important in supporting their associated art forms, however, almost £3m of funding that had previously been awarded to production based companies to produce arts activities, is now awarded to organisations that are two or three degrees removed from the production of work. Therefore, diminishing the RFO pot for producing companies.

It is important that Creative Scotland continues and improves on its support for artist-lead organisations, producing companies, individual artists and EDI focussed work - they are fundamental to the arts and culture in Scotland.