

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee

Creative Scotland – Regular Funding 2018-21

Written submission from Dudendance Theatre

Dudendance have been creating work for 35 years and have considered applying for RFO on many occasions. We are an artist led group under two artistic directors and started to get small grants in 1995. Since 2005 grant sizes increased due to touring and working with larger casts. From 2002-213 we were able to run a summer school for young people with funding from other sources. Dudendance, like many other OPF groups have no full- time staff- we do everything including research, planning, fundraising, teaching workshops, press, publicity and marketing and creating the work. We have no office, regular rehearsal space or admin staff and bring in same collaborating team when required. Because we operate on a project basis what we do “officially” is limited by if, and when, we are awarded funding. Waiting between projects for funding outcomes makes it impossible to have a continuous program. Our work has been very well supported by Creative Scotland who make the effort to come and the productions– their valuable input used to feed into reports that were written and helped to procure a good reputation. We are rare but not unique in having achieved over 35 years of creative output without RFO. Dudendance, and I’m sure other groups would love to be in receipt of regular support. This would allow us to plan ahead, create new work, teach and tour with a level of security and continuity. Under the current system we do not have the resources to manage the demands of the current RFO system.

From my experience of RFO’s (mainly visual arts), most of their CS funding goes into office / staffing costs. Many RFO’s seem overwhelmed by paper work – what is said on paper seems to count more than actual output. This works well if you are good at writing applications and reports but not if you operate with few staff and a heavy output of work. Also, the valuable input of officers on the ground seems to be getting lost as their time is taken up evaluating written material.

Under the current system writing an Open Project Fund application has also become a more arduous process. For a few years, when Creative Scotland was formed – a much simpler application form was introduced doing away with letters of support, there was less paper work and fewer questions. This made writing an application far less time consuming and daunting and easier to re-apply should you not get an award. It’s unclear why this changed again. Within the current application there is one question about the creative project proposed and then another 12 questions on organizational matters including quantifying, evaluating, several on public benefits and estimating audience size. In terms of benefit it is very hard to quantify what effect creativity has on audience, as the very nature of the artistic experience is deeply personal and sometimes takes time to nurture. It is not obligatory to provide past work examples. If past work has been successful and had good feedback from the public surely one could build a level of trust between funder and producer.

Groups like ours are stuck between a rock and a hard place. We have gained enough experience and built up networks that would allow us to operate throughout the year. As OPF is geared towards separate projects, we have to play a waiting

game and then are basically, out of a job, if the outcome is negative. In terms of how to better the current system and having been part of an extensive online discussion one could propose a way for artists and artist led organisation to apply for 3-yr funding under a less bureaucratic system.

If possible the current system the two main funding strands of RFO and OPF could be replaced by a system where artists and artist-led organisations would adhere to different criteria than building based and/or non- artist led organisations. The divide would be between creatives (theatre companies, dance, music, individual artists) and service providers (festivals, facilities venues etc.) making it possible to apply for 3-yr funding in both camps should a program of work be proposed. Service providers would be answerable to the value, quality, effectiveness and accessibility of the service they provide while creatives could be judged by the quality of previous work, the inclusivity of activities and the feedback of audiences and participants. Having the possibility of 3-year funding for more experienced creatives would allow artists led activity to flourish with continuity and without the pressures of being an RFO. If funding were limited per group (in both camps) or per annum there could be more money to go round- bringing freshness and variety to the arts ecology. It would also be worth considering standardising pay-scales so that everyone receiving funding adheres to an official pay level.

Lastly, many artists online have been talking about the “universal basic income” which would be an amazing boon for the arts, especially emerging artists. It would be wise though, not to impose an age restriction (as is being tested now) as artists of all ages struggle to survive! This would hugely increase artistic output and allow a level of security which would also allow continuity for artistic practice and community based activity. It would also allow emerging artists’ time to develop their practice before trying to get into the system.