

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee

Creative Scotland – Regular Funding 2018-21

Written submission from The Work Room

About The Work Room

The Work Room (TWR) is an artist-led organisation, committed to supporting a sustainable environment for independent artists working in dance in Scotland. Our mission is to empower artists to lead in their practice, enabling them to make high quality, pioneering dance for diverse contexts at home and internationally.

TWR was established in 2008 by a group of artists in Glasgow who agitated for space and resource for dance in the city. We have a studio base within Tramway, which was created as part of Scottish Ballet's capital development. We are a membership organisation for artists who work in dance, movement and choreography. The priorities of our members inform our artistic programme and policies. We aim to foster a community of artists, encouraging our members to be active in the independent dance sector in Scotland. Our strength is in over 130 individuals; a powerful network of connections, experience and skills.

Our Response:

TWR was awarded Creative Scotland regular funding for the first time in 2015/16 – 2017/18 and we were successful in our application for RFO 2018/19 – 2020/21. We have been awarded £465,000 for this three- year period.

We are a purposely small organisation and operate with low overhead costs to put as much of our available funds as possible directly into the hands of artists through bursaries and fees. Regular funding from Creative Scotland is central to the work we deliver for independent artists. It enables us to employ 2 members of staff (1.8FTE) to manage the organisation's programmes and provide a base from which to develop partnerships and fundraise from other sources. The funding also provides paid residencies and project opportunities for independent dance artists.

As a successful applicant, the key challenges we faced through the process was the length of time it took and how the uncertainty of future funding hampered our ability to plan. We had to delay our 'call outs' for residencies, projects and opportunities in 2018/19 until we had confirmation of our funding. We observed the impact of this across the cultural sector and particularly the impact of this on independent artists and companies where opportunities were not being advertised and projects left unconfirmed.

We recognise that Creative Scotland is under immense pressure where requests for funding will always far outstrip the budget available. However, we would call for a funding process that places care at its heart:

- Care for those who are facing the challenges of not being funded;
- Care for those facing the responsibility of receiving funds, especially those being funded for the first time;

- Care for everyone caught up within this process, including CS staff, everyone involved in organisations who applied and the independent artists who have been / still are waiting to hear if they will be commissioned/ programmed/ engaged on projects.

There were a number of areas of concern through the RFO process and decisions that undermined our confidence and trust in Creative Scotland's ability to serve the arts & cultural sector. These include:

- a shift in policy that has given priority to industry bodies for long-term funding companies led by artists and making work for audiences;
- the lack of understanding given to Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion in funding decisions;
- the U-turn on funding decisions at the re-convened board meeting on the 2 February 2018;
- the introduction of the Touring Fund towards the end of the process, as a reason for specific funding decisions.

Funding for independent artists & companies:

The currently funding climate in Scotland puts substantial pressure on independent artists and companies. We are concerned about the unhealthy working lives of many independent dance artists and the unrealistic juggling they are undertaking to try and sustain a living. Many artists want to play a more influential and dynamic role in Scotland's culture but often feel thwarted and that power is still too often held in the hands of a few.

We call for independent artist more involved and visible in arts funding decisions & policy, including:

- funding structures and process to recognize that being independent and freelance is to be unwaged and when artists seek to engage and influence change within our sectors they are frequently investing a great deal of their own time and resource to do so.
- approaches to enable independent artists to be more visible and influentially within our industry and place greater value on the leadership that comes through their practice.

We call for all organisations in receipt of long-term public funding:

- To be required to pay independent artists fairly for their work
- To have a mandate to open up their resources for independent artists; this could be an a sliding-scale model, with those in receipt of more funding taking on increasing responsibility for sharing resources.