

Arts Council of Wales

Funding for Festivals

July 2011





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Complementary Guidance Note:

July 2011

Funding for Festivals

1. Introduction

From 2011/12 we will be supporting arts festivals through a new funding strand of the Arts Lottery. We have been reviewing our overall approach to funding through Lottery and these guidelines are now integrated into our new funding scheme. These guidelines are intended to help you understand the type of activity that we are keen to support.

This Guidance Note complements the information already published in our General Guide to Arts Council of Wales Funding for Organisations 2010/11 (such as eligibility criteria, funding priorities and advice sources). You should ensure you have read both documents.

The minimum level of application to this funding strand is £5,001 with a maximum award of £100,000 although in practice most awards will be lower than this. This round for applications is only to support festivals that take place from April 2012 onwards. Applications for up to £5,000 will remain within our Small Grants scheme and processed accordingly.

Applications must be received by the deadline **5pm on Friday, 30 September 2011** at our Cardiff Office. Application forms will not be released after Friday, 16 September. **We expect to confirm final funding decisions within thirteen weeks after the deadline.**

Funding for Festivals applications will be assessed as described in our General Guide to Arts Council of Wales Funding for Organisations 2011/12, except that a national decision meeting (comprising Regional Directors, Senior Officers, Officers and National Advisers) will make recommendations to a sub-group of Council.

2. What do we want to fund?

- 2.1 A broad and diverse spectrum of artistic ventures can fit under the banner of Festivals. Festivals are places in which new and unusual things can happen. They act as special cultural highlights, where people meet to take stock of what's going on in the arts and to exchange new ideas.

- 2.2 We want to fund a range of challenging, engaging, celebratory, inspiring festivals. We want to foster events and festival content which bear the hallmark of Wales by fostering Festivals which are special and unique to Wales in their form, content and setting. We want to fund Festivals that create high quality, new cultural opportunities for the public to encounter and explore the arts in all their forms – Festivals that celebrate contemporary achievement in the arts.
- 2.3 We will fund Festivals across the full range of the Arts, with the exception of Film. The funding of all Film Festivals will continue to be delegated to the Film Agency for Wales who co-ordinate this activity. For information, please see our website: www.artswales.org/what-we-do/funding/funding-advice-and-guidelines/film and for information on Film Agency's grant programmes: www.filmagencywales.com.
- 2.4 The Festivals that present a persuasive case for Arts Council support are likely to share some, or all, of the following characteristics:
- festivals can feature any area of artform practice, and can be cross or multi-artform. However, they will have clear artistic focus and will more often than not be specialist in their artform focus. This in turn determines their particular character and content.
 - they will be time-limited, or one-off, events happening over a defined period (festivals will usually be no less than a weekend in duration, unless a single spectacular event is planned)
 - they are time focussed activities but can include other events at different points of the year under the particular Festival's umbrella, supporting the development of the brand of a particular Festival, or developing the content of a future programme of the Festival in question.
 - they will have the celebration and the exploration of the arts and culture at their heart
 - they will be distinctive and have artistically determined 'character'
 - they will have some claim to uniqueness, either in terms of artform or the place in which they happen
 - they will look beyond their immediate locality and have a wider view of the world
 - they will be innovative and imaginative, both in terms of their presentation of the arts and their approach to audience development
 - they will offer something that might not otherwise be available

3. Funding criteria

We will expect the Festivals applying to us for support to provide evidence of the way they fulfil the following criteria. The criteria are not weighted. We would expect applicants to provide responses to all the items. **The questions in bold below form the core of the information to be supplied on our application form:**

Curatorial vision

The most successful festival is more than a competently conceived collection of events. It will often be driven by passion and imagination – the desire to share new insights, discover emerging talents. Programmes and themes will have been conceived in an interesting, sometimes quirky fashion, tempting audiences to stray, on occasions, from the well-beaten track of the obvious and the common-place.

What is the creative rationale of your Festival and how will this be realised?

Quality of programme

We'll attach particular importance to the quality of the programme – compelling, un-missable events that demand to be seen. The best Festivals act as special cultural highlights. They are places to meet, to exchange new ideas, to offer moments of celebration. A festival is at its most exciting when it acts, in part, as a testing ground: a place to explore new work and repertoire; the extraordinary flowering of creative synergy and surprise that can emerge from the unpredictable alchemy of bringing together the right 'mix' of creative individuals.

What are you planning to programme and how does it meet the high quality standards that we're looking for?

New work

We believe that festivals have a key role to play in reinvigorating the repertoire or 'canon' within a particular artform. We're not saying that we have no interest in the 'classics', especially when they're rarely seen, heard or exhibited. The traditions that are now the cornerstones of our cultural heritage were new and challenging in their time. Much of this work still has a relevance that resonates today. But work that's of its time has a particular immediacy. We will put a premium on new work delivered through Festivals and new approaches to discovering and uncovering cultural legacy.

What are you commissioning, featuring or creating that is new in its approach in your Festival?

Calibre of artists

Never was the saying “If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing well” more relevant than when applied to festivals. We expect to see a commitment to the best artists from Wales and from further afield. We are especially interested in the opportunities that festivals can create for the development of Welsh artists. However, if a festival lays claim to the title ‘international’ in its name, we’ll expect such claims to stand up to scrutiny with integrity and credibility. We also acknowledge that within a culturally diverse Wales the “international” artist can often be within the country and in need of recognition as such.

Who are the artists featured in your festival and how are they enhancing the quality and impact of your activities?

Audience development

High quality artistic work is not created in a vacuum. We want as many people as possible to experience and enjoy the arts. We want to increase participation and attendance across the arts as a whole, and also in the organisations we fund. But for an event that by its very nature is ‘occasional’, we must be careful not to overload festivals with unrealistic audience development expectations. However, through the programme choices that they make, the artists that they engage, and the ‘risks’ that they can take, festivals are well placed to attract new audiences and to broaden the horizons of existing audiences. This needs to be matched to thought through and implemented public engagement and marketing strategies.

How are you going to engage people with and in your Festival? What are your plans for marketing and audience development?

We would want the Festivals we support to show their commitment to access both physical and otherwise, in their planning and their delivery of information and the work of the Festival itself.

How will you ensure access to your Festival both physically and otherwise?

Arts Council of Wales supports Festivals demonstrating particular commitments to participation, and growing capacity, experience and involvement in their communities.

What plans do you have to further participation and involvement with your community?

Bilingualism and the Welsh language

Wales is a bilingual nation – legally, socially, culturally, and as individuals and communities. Nothing makes Wales more distinctive than the Welsh Language. The language provides the means to understand and enjoy an extraordinarily rich literature and culture. The Arts thrive on this and are a key component in continuing the Welsh language’s vital role at the heart of Welsh life.

What is your Festival’s approach to working across languages?

Governance, organisational competence and operational approach

It’s very important that arts organisations that receive public funding perform well. Arts organisations come in all shapes and sizes, from charities that are limited by guarantee, to operational units functioning within other organisations such as universities, or a local authority department. However, critical to the success and resilience of any organisation is a strong, engaged and diligent Board that includes a range of representative expertise. We want to see Festivals building capacity in Wales and are interested in your approaches to procurement which maximise growth of the arts economy in Wales.

How would you describe the values, skills and expertise that your organisation uses in managing its activities? (You might find it helpful to use Arts Council of Wales’s *Strive to Excel* as a point of reference)

Finance

Financial planning is critical to the success of any Festival. The organisation should supply its festival budget. You should include all expenditure and income projections and other partnership and sponsorship funding.

4. The application process

Applications to our Funding for Festivals will follow our usual Lottery application processes. For this funding strand, please note the following:

4.1 We can consider support for:

- a single, 'special' event within a festival (for example, a commission or an anniversary celebration)
- a single festival
- the longer term development of a festival over a two or three year period

4.2 Support for a Festival's funding cycle over more than one financial year must demonstrate:

- a high degree of development over the period, or
- the need to prepare for a commission, a major work over an extended period of time
- evidence of planning cycles involving advanced commitments and contracting of artists

4.3 RFOs can apply to this Fund but must demonstrate the proposed activity lies outside the work we fund through our core grant to the organisation.

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