

SUMMARY OF REVIEW OF ARTS GRANTS

This is a summary of a review undertaken by Arthur Lappin, independent arts consultant, under the direction of Ray Yeates, City Arts Officer.

There are four categories of grants: **Bursary awards; Project awards; Revenue awards; Neighbourhood and Voluntary awards.**

Although the application form has been radically altered in recent years, there is scope to consider further simplifications in the process, especially with respect to the Neighbourhood/Voluntary category. The maximum amounts available under all but the Revenue category are relatively small and, to an extent, the application process should be reflective of this reality. A forum for applicants to comment constructively on the application, delivery and impact of the Grants process would be a source of valuable learning.

All of the four programmes are seriously underfunded in terms of the volume and quality of demand. The funding available has not risen for many years, despite significant increase in other aspects of DCC's support for arts and culture.

BURSARY AWARDS

The total budget for this category is €75,000 and the maximum value is €5,000. The number of applicants was 76 and the number of awards was 17 (22%). The score of awardees was 85% and over. The budget necessary to provide the average award to all applicants scoring over 60% would be €322,003.

The system is fair but the application process is quite elaborate for the amount involved and should be simplified. The upper cap of €5,000 is too low for most significant professional activities. A higher cap might allow the more exceptional applicants to stand out from the field. The ratio of 4:1 female to male should be explored to establish why this is the case. DCC should publicise these awards by holding a press conference as it reflects well on both DCC and the awardees who greatly value these awards. Artists should acknowledge receipt of the award on professional publications and notices. Rather than using residence in Dublin as a criteria, applicants should reflect more deeply on the Dublin dimension. The intention to provide support for at least one bursary in each category means a weaker proposal in one category pushes out a stronger candidate in another category. With greater resources this would less likely be an issue. Where awards to individuals are concerned, the priority should be to assist the most promising young artists. The option of collaboration with a major sponsor to leverage the fund or specific bursary should be explored.

PROJECT AWARDS

The budget for 2022 was €105,000. The maximum value of individual grants was €10,000. The number of applications was 55 and the number of successful applications was 19. The score range of the applicants was 85% and over. The total amount sought by applicants was €445,716. There was a notable decline in applications from 87 in 2021 to 55 in 2022. This may be a reflection of the high rejection rate in 2021.

The system of application and assessment is very robust and fair but highly competitive with many projects which merit support, either not being awarded or receiving less than viable support.

The importance of endorsement for artists being awarded Project Grants by Dublin City Council is significant and can be very helpful in securing Arts Council funding but the criteria for DCC funding and Arts Council funding should be more distinctly different. DCC should generate more publicity around awardees and also request a report to be furnished to monitor and assess the projects and capture data for future use.

One recommendation is to distinguish between individuals, mid-scale organisations and festivals within the Project application process. Many of the applications were too ambitious for Project grants. Not all the projects can be achieved in a single year so the criteria could be altered to facilitate support on a multi-annual basis. Developmental considerations should be embedded in the criteria as projects are often process driven and need time and support to develop. One option would be to consider 1 or 2 major awards of €50,000 and seek to attract a corporate sponsor (with naming rights) to leverage this sum.

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND VOLUNTARY

The budget for 2022 was €100,000. The number of applications was 34 and the number of successful applications was 27. The average value of the grant was €4,000. The successful applicants average score was 60% upwards.

Clinics or tutorials for applicants to improve the quality of their applications is recommended. The application process would benefit from simplification bearing in mind that community groups may not have the same fluency in the application process as those applying for Project and Revenue funding. Community organisations require a different approach to an application process than professional artists/organisations and the Arts Office role is to be nurturing and supportive of this sector. It should be explored as to what extent the distribution of Project and Neighbourhood Grants are limited by suitable community venues and resident community based artists.

REVENUE

The Revenue budget has remained unchanged at €300,000 for several years and there has not been a significant change in the distribution of the funding. The repetitive nature of these Revenue awardees creates a lack of ambition and a sense of entitlement which goes against the developmental nature of the Arts Office and is perceived externally as a top up of the Arts Council grants. Greater diversity and community engagement needs to be reflected in the criteria which needs to be redefined by DCC priorities.