

Arts Council of Wales

Theatre Production Development Summary of the consultation and our response

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Theatre Production Development

Summary of the consultation and our response

Introduction

Our Investment Review committed us to creating:

A new development fund to encourage better quality drama production in both languages. The emphasis would be on investment at the preproduction stage – writer / script development, rehearsed readings, work in progress etc.

Its proposed aims sought to:

Help theatre producers to develop work which is exciting, challenging and relevant to the audiences of Wales

By the closure of the consultation period (4th February 2011) we'd received feedback from 19 people in response to the consultation:

Revenue Funded Organisations (2010/11)	10
Other organisations	4
Individuals	5

We'd like to thank everyone who responded to the consultation.

The responses basically welcomed the new Theatre Development Fund. This summary draws together the main themes and ideas that arose from these consultation responses and our responses to them.

Summary of Responses

Question 1

Do you agree that there is a need for such a fund? Would there be genuine potential for this to lead to the development of new and innovative productions? How might that be a catalyst to significant audience development?

Of the 19 respondents, 12 replied to this question. All 12 gave a positive endorsement of the need for the fund and felt that there would be genuine potential for this to lead to the development of interesting and innovative productions.

A number of respondents referred to whether this scheme would be a catalyst for audience development. A number questioned whether the scheme in itself would lead to audience development and suggested that this needs to be one element in a more comprehensive audience development strategy. Other respondents, however, did see ways in which work done through the scheme could help in audience development.

"I don't believe, however, that this process, on its own, will necessarily be the catalyst to 'significant audience development'; it needs to be part of a more comprehensive strategy (see comments above)."

"I think a fund such as this is needed to support the ability of producers to make the most of their creative partnerships and collaborations. In time this will boost the perception of the theatre in Wales both internally and externally which will make working in the arts in Wales an increasingly attractive proposition. This will be to the benefit of artists, audiences and artform development.

However, this is not the same as saying that significant audience development will be a result. Audience development is a long term issue and requires acknowledgement that the acceptance of new ideas takes time to percolate through. It is an on-going activity in itself, requiring its own resources and strategies.

In this sense I think there is still some confusion about whether the fund is for the development of ideas which may or may not result in a quality production (development of artist/artform), or to test work that audiences will respond to in significant numbers (audience development)."

"We agree that there is a need for the Theatre Development Fund and recognise the need within the current infrastructure to find a way to make new work 'tour ready'. This encourages collaborative working, which in itself should lead to innovative and experimental projects.

With regard to audiences in this context, the Theatre Development Fund gives the company or consortium an opportunity to present work to potential audiences at an earlier stage of the process, and to enable feedback from audiences to inform the development of the piece. This in itself, although invaluable for the development of the project, might not be a catalyst to audience development in the wider context. "

"We agree that there is the need for a fund of this description and for a fund which allows for new collaborations to take place, new working methods to be explored whilst recognising and valuing experiences gained through these processes may not and should not always result in touring productions."

“Byddai cronfa o’r fath yn ddefnyddiol iawn, yn enwedig ar gyfer cynhyrchiadau newydd, arloesol yn y Gymraeg. Byddai angen mwy o wybodaeth am sut y mae CCC yn rhagweld y partneriaethau yn datblygu.”

“A fund of this sort will be very useful, in particular for new, innovative production in Welsh. More information is needed on how ACW foresees these partnerships developing.”

A number of respondents pointed out positive ways this scheme could aid audience development:

“Yes, the scheme is a great starting point to produce new work without huge financial risks and as long as it works alongside presenting organisations will also help develop new audiences.”

“We also think the Fund could lead to a regular culture of the sector, and audiences, engaging in seeing and discussing work in development. This should be encouraged. How might that be a catalyst to significant audience development? Essentially, and disregarding factors which operate at different scales such as casting, because it should be easier to sustain and develop an audience for good work that producers and presenters have a pre-familiarity with, and confidence in, than it is to develop audiences for work of a poorer quality.”

“As a catalyst for audience development it may well open arts engagement with potentially new strands of audiences but if the emphasis is too much on audience development this could once again lead to less risk taking by the artists and venues.”

Our Response:

Since the prime function of this scheme is to give opportunities for the development of new ideas and practice and there has been unanimous feedback about the value of the scheme in doing this, we need to monitor the ways in which the productions being created through the scheme feed into audience development as well as taking a proactive role in developing suitable audience development initiatives to exploit the potential of these new productions.

We would agree that production companies would need to work with venues on joint audience development plans and this is what is recommended should be described as part of the application.

While it was envisaged that many of the projects supported through the fund would result in productions that tour, the prime focus is on the development of

work which is exciting, challenging and relevant to the audiences of Wales. This does not necessarily mean that that work has to tour. Therefore an additional paragraph 2.6 could be added:

2.6 While it is envisaged that a significant proportion of the applications to this fund will be for the development of work for touring across Wales, we would also accept applications for ideas for projects that would be particular to a location, venue or site specific performance space.

Work has already begun on developing guidance notes on what we mean by collaborative working. However, it is in the very nature of the scheme and specifically stated in the documentation, that the exact nature of methodology is open:

“We are looking for fresh approaches and new ideas and would leave it open for the applicant to describe how the work would be developed”.

This approach has been generally welcomed by respondents.

Question 2

Is our description too vague in 2.5 about how funds might be used? Is there a value in leaving the method open for exploration via applications?

Eleven of the responses answered this question. Ten of these are positive endorsements. The eleventh is a guarded endorsement and suggests a pilot to evaluate the worth of the fund and the quality of application that it engenders. While the fund will not be introduced as a pilot, there will be an evaluation process that will cover this point. Amendments will be considered in future years, if necessary, in the light of the nature of the applications received.

Specific Responses

“We also agree that it would be helpful to keep as broad as possible the terms in which how the funds might be used. As our other colleagues have noted it would be helpful to establish how much (percentage) of these funds is envisaged would be directed to multi-media/cross media collaborations and how much for more traditional drama projects.”

And

"To keep the opportunity for innovative work to be creative, we agree that the description of how funds should be used be kept fairly open. However, we understand from conversations with ACW about this paper that there is a desire that the Fund would encourage cross art-form projects. It would be useful to know to what extent cross art-form projects will be considered over and above drama-only projects."

"We feel that there is confusion between points 2.1 and 2.3 in the consultation document. The first section suggests that the Theatre Development Fund should enable touring productions to have had a development process at an early stage of the project, which would then enable producers to tour 'work which is exciting, challenging and relevant to the audiences of Wales'. The second section suggests that the Theatre Development Fund is there to encourage activity that is purely developmental and would not necessarily 'result in the creation of a piece of work in its own right'. It would be useful to have further clarification on this issue."

Our Response:

We are not going to prescribe percentages to certain types of project. This scheme is about development of drama projects but it is envisaged that collaborations with other art forms could be one of the means of creating the sort of exciting projects that are envisaged. There has been general endorsement of the breadth of scope for interpreting the guidelines and introducing percentages would be contrary to this.

We are trying to make it clear that this fund is not just stage one in terms of projects for our National Touring Scheme. Of course we would expect a number of the projects that are developed through this fund to result in an application to National Touring. But firstly receiving support from this Fund would not imply automatic success in a subsequent application to National Touring. Neither would we expect National Touring to be the obvious next stage for every application.

Question 3

Do you agree with our description of who would be eligible for support?

There were twelve responses to this question. All supported our description although some asked for that description to be widened.

Specific responses

Four respondents made the case that it would be valuable to allow the possibility for youth groups in particular youth theatre groups to be included as partner contributors. The case was made that a number of projects had been developed working with a youth group and then taken on to a full professional production.

Two used the opportunity to make the case for our continued support for youth theatre activities across the board and gave examples of where our lottery funding has been of great benefit to particular youth theatre groups.

One response suggested that the fund should not exclude amateurs.

"Essentially, all the bases are covered in your list of eligible artists and organisations. However, it is not clear whether there a way of allowing for a group of artists to get together without a full partnership with a company, theatre or arts centre?"

"Generally, yes, but we think, without compromising the desire for the Fund to encourage collaborative work, that it would be advantageous for individuals to be able to apply for lower level awards with the full expectation that any production application would then need to be led by a producer or presenter. Many awards will likely be less than individuals get through Creative Wales so we see no reason why there should be an in principle objection to individuals applying to this Fund."

"We would broadly agree with the criteria for accessing the funds with one key exception. The Investment Review has left huge gaps in provision of theatre for children and young people, particularly across the East of Wales. One of the ways this might be addressed is through the production of work by students or by youth theatre groups which is of a quality to tour."

"We would, however, require further clarification over point 3.3 regarding companies that are already funded to develop new work, and a clearer definition for the term 'new work'. We feel that some collaborations involving companies that are already funded to develop new work might be invaluable in terms of sharing of good practice and ideas."

"In general we agree but would like some more clarity on eligibility for Revenue Funded Organisations. If the ideas for production development fall out with the Revenue Funding offer detailing RFO's core work then can all RFO's access this fund for new and innovative projects and productions? We hope that this is the case as it will allow those who already produce quality experiences to experiment with new and innovative ways of creating new work in collaboration with, as yet unknown, partners

and artists and allow us to explore connecting our organisations with a different kind of audience.”

Our Response:

This fund has been set up with the specific purpose of developing professional practice and leading towards improving the quality and range of professional theatre available in Wales. In setting up this fund, we are not diminishing the possibility of youth theatres or amateur companies applying for funding through our project schemes and we would welcome strong, well thought through applications from such organisations. There are a number of well made points in the responses which describe projects where a professional writer has honed his or her ideas / scripts by working with a group of young people. There is nothing to stop such practice being part of an application if that is seen as a constructive way of developing an idea. In such cases the youth theatre or amateur group would be a partner in the project not the applicant. Youth Theatre or amateur groups could take the ideas incorporated in this fund document and formulate an application using those ideas through our participation strands of Lottery funding.

While this fund has been developed deliberately leaving a great deal of openness for interpretation, at its heart it is about development of ideas leading towards the idea of eventual production. So while the ideas and how they will be developed could be at a very early stage, we want to see the applicants using this experimental stage to look at questions of how to stage their ideas and to begin to consider questions of promoting those ideas in a professional way. And all of these need to be done within a context of considering what and who the future audience might be. This fund is the opportunity for artists who haven't got the sort of contacts, experience or knowledge to address such issues to make partnerships to enable them to do so.

We strongly endorse and support youth theatre provision and providing the best of opportunities for our young people to participate in theatre and the arts. However, it is not our intention or desire to replace professional provision in any of the areas of Wales by amateur or semi-professional activity.

Clarity will have been given to individual revenue clients in the discussion and then wording concerning possible lottery funding in their revenue funding agreements. The wording of the first bullet point of 3.3 in the consultation document, however, is grammatically incorrect. The following is suggested-

Development work by revenue funded companies part of whose remit is to develop new work. (However, where such companies could demonstrate the need to develop a particularly exciting collaboration an exception might be made).

Question 4

Do you feel that these are the right criteria for us to use when assessing applications?

Ten responses were received. All endorsed the criteria and offered advice on guidance that would be useful and asked for clarification of particular points which could also be included in the guidance to the fund that we will publish.

Specific response

"The quality of creative collaborators is restrictive. New, exciting and innovative work, often comes from new or emerging artists without a track record but they could be the whole stimulus behind an idea. This is not necessary, the application should be judged on its potential and not necessarily the personnel."

Our Response:

We stand by this criterion. We have not said that applicants or collaborators have to have a certain number of years' experience or a specific track record. Even new or emerging artists would have a track record, however, of work undertaken as a student etc. We would welcome applications from new and emerging artists and would interpret the criteria in relation to their relative lack of professional experience.

"The headings for the funding criteria are fine. However, as currently phrased there is not enough of an idea of what might constitute a good, or at least acceptable, level of potential, audience development or calibre of collaborator for them to be used as a reasonable way of giving marks out of ten to a project."

Our Response:

If these were issues that could be judged by giving marks out of ten against a detailed, calibrated set of criteria, we would end up getting applications that had been formulated, not from a passion for the idea, but from a desire to get

full marks for our criteria. Our decision panel will use the published criteria and be able to show how the successful applications demonstrate the best match to those criteria.

"We fully agree that artists should be paid appropriately, but as there are very few industry rates for development work think it would be helpful for ACW to provide guidance on this as part of the guidelines for the Fund."

Our Response:

We will incorporate guidance in our Guidance Note for the fund.

Question 5

Is there anything missing that you feel we should have included?

There were eight responses. Four said that they didn't think anything was missing. Two offered suggestions and two asked about whether an application to this fund could be in addition to another lottery application in each year.

"There should be an earlier stage, where very small grants are available (up to £1000) where it is possible just to develop a very basic idea. To be able to do something on a whim, may bring very exciting discoveries that can then develop with a more structured Production Development application; even 'whims cost money these days and for many companies the cost of a 'whim' is enough to restrict creativity."

Our Response:

This fund would not preclude applications on a similar basis by individuals to our existing application rounds. This is a suggestion that it would be useful to hold on the back burner and to re-consider in the evaluation exercise to be held after the first two years of the scheme.

"The criteria should also include the assessment of the project's awareness of its financial viability from the end promoter's point of view, i.e. an idea of fees/deals required, discussion of likely audience size etc. Also some outline description of how and where the project would be presented if it came to realisation, e.g. type of space, audience capacity, touring pattern or site specific etc. In my view applicants should also demonstrate an awareness of the key 'best practice' criteria discussed above at application stage, and should use the development process to research or develop their project within these best practice indicators."

Our Response:

This will be considered for inclusion in the guidance for applicants.

"It would be helpful to know if successful applicants would be eligible to apply for other projects, or be part of other partnerships, during the same year."

And

"It would be useful to know whether an application to the Theatre Development Fund then precludes the company or individual from making another production application for a different project within the same financial year: we would encourage ACW to make this fund applicable over-and-above other applications, as with the current Training fund."

Our Response:

Application to this fund will be exempt from the one application per year rule.

Question 6

Our Theatre Development Fund will be a 'strand' within our Lottery programme and will broadly follow our overall Lottery guidelines. Is there anything in our current guidelines that you'd like to see reviewed or changed?

There were eight responses to this question. Three recorded nothing that they wished us to consider. One asked for further clarification of how a 'strand' within the Lottery programme worked. The other four items are listed below.

Specific Responses

"I find it odd that marketing costs are eligible but website costs are not. To include web costs as part of the delivery of a marketing strategy seems entirely fair. In this day and age, it also seems reasonable to leave the door open to entirely web-based productions or collaborative projects."

And

"We find the need for letters of support time-consuming for all involved and are not convinced of their value. Generally, however, the present schemes work well, and we find that the help and advice from ACW Officers (and from the Powys ADO) is a good

system. The question regarding Public Benefit and Demand is frequently all but impossible to answer for innovative work of any kind. This section of the application process would benefit from some re-working."

Our Response:

These suggestion will be considered by the officer group looking at revision of Lottery scheme guidelines.

Specific Responses

"RCT Theatres would particularly like ACW to enable applications to this scheme to be "over and above" and additional to the old 1 application per year to any ACW scheme. This, we feel, we would be invaluable to ourselves and other members of the new portfolio of RFOs who, it could be argued, did not achieve the level of funding enabling them to "thrive, rather than survive"."

And

"Successful applications to the Fund should be outside of the usual 'one live' project grant rule."

Our Response:

Application to this fund will be exempt from the one application per year rule.

Question 7

Do you have any comments on assessment and decision-making?

Seven responses were made to this question.

"I would encourage the Arts Council to ensure that the voices of presenters and audience development officers are taken into account in the assessment of applications; but I don't believe that collecting letters of 'support' from theatres and arts centres is the way to decide on this. Your choice of national advisers for the assessments should be based on their understanding of artform and audience development."

"I think it is important to discuss the project with any named collaborators at assessment stage, and not just the applicant."

"It would be very helpful to know the proposed time-scale for turn around of applications and we also feel that it would be helpful if this fund and its deadline dates were to run in tandem with the National Touring Fund."

"It would be useful to know the timescale between submission of the application and a decision being made.

In terms of application deadlines, we feel it would be helpful for the Theatre Production Development Fund deadline to coincide with that of the National Touring Fund – a full year would give sufficient time for a project to have the potential of being turned around in time for an application to National Touring in 12 months' time.

It would be useful to have clarification on the role of National Advisors in terms of how they are selected to represent the art-form and their selection onto and involvement in the funding panel. We felt that more representation from outside Wales would be constructive."

"A fydd y meini prawf ar gyfer yr asesiad ar gael i'r ymgeiswyr hefyd?

"Will the assessment criteria be available to applicants as well?"

"We think the process should involve:

A first sift of applications by ACW officers to identify a shortlist

Presentations by shortlisted applicants to a panel comprising an equal number of ACW officers and either National Advisers or theatre practitioners with significant experience in developing new work.

We understand it has been suggested that applications for the Fund would be to a Spring deadline. We think it would be much better for the Fund to have an Autumn deadline, as for the National Touring strand. This would mean successful applications would have a nine or ten month window, ie December to September, in which to undertake development work and, if a project is worth pursuing, submit a production application the following year. A Spring application round would add a further year to the process as there would be insufficient time between, say, announcement in May or June, the window needed for development to take place and a September National Touring deadline."

"Because of the creative and innovative nature of this award we would suggest the decision making panel should mirror the "Creative Wales" award process and that an element of Peer Assessment should also be involved in the process."

Our Response:

The dead-line for applications will be in the autumn to co-incide with that of the National Touring Fund. These comments will be taken into account in formulating the procedure for assessment and in the preparing the guidance notes for applicants.

8. Other comments

In addition to responses grouped above respondents contributed a lot of positive thinking on further refinements and definitional questions. These are worth singling out and taking up. Respondents also opened points out onto broader questions for theatre in Wales at the present time.

"1.3: I welcome the acknowledgement of the range of organizations that might be involved in production. My only concern is that the last sentence here is not clear. I think it means that there are two priorities: (i) new and challenging collaborations, (ii) non-revenue funded producers. But it could be just one!"

Our Response:

Change the final sentence in 1.3 for clarification to:

Major priorities for this new fund will be-

- a) The support of new and challenging collaborations
- b) Creative development by non revenue funded producing companies.

"1.4: I think there will need to be some thought given to the balance between this fund as a stimulus for research and its role as the first step towards a tour. You don't want everyone who gets a Development grant to think that it is then a foregone conclusion that they will get Touring support... On the other hand, the use of the word 'parallel' implies that there might not be any crossover at all!"

Our Response:

We agree that the fund is meant to be flexible and to respond to different stages of development. It is noted that the word parallel needs to be used with caution. There seems to be strong support throughout the responses for us to leave the descriptions and possibilities for use of the fund as wide as possible. We will need to monitor carefully the response to the fund in its first two years of operation and then re-consider whether giving more detail in the guidance is necessary.

"2.2 - 2.4: These paragraphs set out some clear requirements which I welcome. In particular remembering the audience and to share the development work with partners."

Our Response:

These are points that can be emphasised in the guidance to applicants.

"4.1: I am not sure that giving, 'non-verbal theatricality' as an example of a technique or theatre form is helpful. I'd either stop at, "A whole variety of forms of theatre," or I would look at giving a much more comprehensive list!"

Our Response:

There is a lack of clarity here that needs to be addressed. Paragraph 4.1. was dealing with the issue of language and the key points were that a) we were open to applications using either Welsh or English and, if both languages were to be used, that this was done in an interesting rather than a pedestrian way b) we wanted the choice of and use of language itself to be addressed in interesting and innovative ways and c) that there is the potential for creation of non-language based work. However, it is also important that the point is made that the fund has been established to encourage the exploration of a whole variety of forms of theatre and theatre technique and it may be that this needs to be stated elsewhere in the guidance.

"The proposal is generally welcomed as a helpful initiative that should assist the increase in and diversification of drama, or wider 'theatre' productions originating in Wales.

One important question though raised by paragraph 1.2 in the proposal document is why – with the existing huge investment in drama via Clwyd Theatr Cymru, Sherman Cymru, Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru and National Theatre Wales (the Torch Theatre is missing from this list) – are we still failing to deliver a "stable portfolio of consistently high quality work across all scales of activity?"

The paragraph goes on to state that venues report that there is insufficient touring work of good quality to satisfy demand, and that the work being produced struggles to sustain a split week. Again, the key, unanswered question is why?

Producing drama is a complex and difficult process. Under today's economically challenging times it becomes even harder. There are many output criteria in the paper being asked of a successful drama production:

- *Work that is challenging and innovative, exciting and relevant*
- *Work that is of high quality*
- *Work that attracts an audience*

To these I would add:

- *Work that is conceived, advised, booked, produced and toured with sufficient lead time (an industry standard best practice?) to fit with the programming schedules of venues/promoters and their engagement with their audiences – a fundamental requirement but one which is not reliably met by all producers at the moment.*
- *Work that does not rely on the promoter/venue to further subsidise the producing company, i.e. work that a promoter can feel confident will attract a large enough paying audience to cover the guarantee asked by the producer, or, in the case of more “challenging” (non-commercial) work, a split deal that removes the risk of loss from the promoter.*
- *Work that is offered with some prior co-operation on touring slots between producers, i.e. a good spread of touring throughout the (drama?) year, and avoiding three or four productions on the road at the same time.*

We must find ways of ensuring that these many benchmarks of ‘best practice’ are met and delivered as fundamental requirements and responsibilities of any producer. It is a waste of public investment to fund work if the work is not produced properly. How do we clarify what the producing and touring responsibilities of the four (five) companies named above are, and ensure that these responsibilities are delivered? How do we ensure that all the measures of best practice are met by any producer? How do we effectively co-ordinate the production output of a number of different producers working at a variety of scales? How do we ensure that a sufficient output of high quality is actually delivered across all scales? How can we ensure the operation of an effective, strategic approach to drama production in Wales that develops the artform, content and audiences in the manner outlined in the paper?

I find the proposals for the Theatr Production Development Fund fit within these much bigger questions. The provision of opportunities to develop drama, or wider ‘theatre’ productions as described in the consultation paper – whilst being generally positive and welcome – must be part of a more holistic approach to drama/theatre production, one that does not yet fully exist in practice. The ‘suck it and see’ approach referred to in paragraph 2.2 is perhaps another way of recognising the lack of a working strategy; pressure to succeed is not necessarily a bad thing, and rather than a barrier to success can also be exactly what raises the game. However, the key to success for drama in Wales is to move away from a disparate approach towards one that is more co-ordinated and thought through.”

Our Response:

This response highlights a situation that goes beyond the remit of this consultation exercise but it outlines concerns that are of importance to producers, presenters and the Arts Council. As well as the issues that the response raises, there is also the issue that is mentioned but not expanded upon, the desirability of getting to a point where theatres can book productions for a full week and attract audiences for a week's run. We are committed to continued dialogue with the relevant parties in order to work on the feasibility of making this possible and this would certainly involve addressing all the issues that have been raised in this response.

"We agree with the premise of the consultation, drawn from the Investment Review, that:-

- The current split of resources between national companies such as Theatr Genedlaethol, National Theatre Wales, Clwyd Theatr Cymru and the Sherman means that there is little financial support available for companies producing challenging and innovative work for mid and small scale venues.*
- The pressure on venues to produce a return on box office sales means companies many feel forced to take "safe" options and familiar works rather than more experimental pieces. In turn, companies themselves are producing work which lacks dynamism and ambition but is more likely to find a place in theatre programmes based on projected box office.*
- Even established companies with a reputation for quality, such as Mappa Mundi, are struggling to find slots in some theatre's programmes as managers feel an ever increasing pressure to stage less expensive shows with higher potential returns.*
- At the same time however, National Theatre Wales remarkable programme of innovative work is making audiences think again about what theatre in and of Wales might be. At present there is a gap, in fact a chasm, between the kind of work NTW can afford to and dare to make and the kind of work companies can afford to and dare to make to tour to mid and small scale theatres. The challenge is to harness that energy and potential so that we develop a new theatre ecology and the producers, directors and performers of the future have somewhere to take their ideas and new audiences to present them to.*

As theatres, we cannot afford the "suck it and see" approach outlined in 2.2. and very few companies have a budget to produce work on that basis. What we can do is work with producing companies on co-productions so that not just Directors but marketing,

technical and rehearsal resources can be shared and venues can be involved at every stage of making work. Where this can and does happen, largely through AOC funding, genuine partnerships can be built and some of the potential issues around presenting and marketing new work can be ironed out in the very early stages. The relationships between Mappa Mundi and Theatr Mwldan and Mid Wales Opera and Theatr Hafren offer good working examples of this model.”

Our Response:

This response emphasises the role outlined in the paper for projects supported through this fund to be backed by collaboration and partnership and for there to be clear thought about the audience to be targeted and methods to be used in that targeting. We do, however, need to face the possibility that the cost of more adventurous programming, particularly to venues without significant audience capacity, may never realistically be covered by box office income. It could be timely over the next year as this fund starts the process of the development of a new stream of exciting and innovative productions, to consider how we would expect support of these to be included – and financially supported by – the subsidies that we give to the core network of venues.

“The proposals are very good with clear criteria. Certainly there is a need for such a fund - there are many theatre makers that I come across who are frustrated that there are few opportunities for them to make work.

I wonder if there should be a requirement to involve some sort of mentoring process during a project. And perhaps there should be some sort of presentation/interview as opposed to just a written application.

It would also be good practise to involve theatre professionals of experience and calibre in the selection of projects as well as arts officers and national advisers.”

Our Response:

It was certainly the intention that, where appropriate, the inclusion of a mentor or mentors could be part of a development plan. It may be that this concept could be emphasised or strengthened in the guidance.

The idea of a presentation or interview as part of the selection process was discussed when the consultation paper was being written. While it was agreed that it could be a useful way of working, the idea has not been pursued on the grounds that it would be comparatively costly both in terms of expenses and officer time.

Our procedures specify that expertise brought into panel decision making meetings should be in the form of national advisers. There are theatre professionals of experience and calibre amongst our national advisers. We need to continue to ensure that we are recruiting with panels such as this in mind.

"In 3.3 clarity about which organisations have a remit to develop 'new work' would be welcome. Couldn't that in some way be said to apply to virtually all revenue funded companies as they are all creating original work? Are there any Regional Performing Arts Centres who are expected to have responsibility or interest in this area too, eg through previously awarded Beacon funding that has now been effectively consolidated through the Investment Review?"

We understand the need to ensure this fund isn't hoovered-up by producing RFOs, but is there a smart way to bring RFOs into a productive relationship with this fund, particularly those of us that have resources that could benefit, or support, a development period?"

Our Response:

We need to test this year that the descriptions agreed with revenue clients in their revenue funding agreements are clear enough to establish what activity they are already funded to create and develop and what activity is additional and therefore an eligible activity for application to this fund. We also need to ensure that there is a balance in use of this funding to ensure that we are making the most of the potential for revenue clients to support and collaborate on projects while also ensuring that this fund can be accessed by new, emerging talent.

"2.2 We would like clarification as to what constitutes a "Venue" for the purposes of this award bearing in mind the innovative/audience development elements implicit in the fund and the fact that the product (if any) created will be expected to have the potential to develop a further application for National Touring?"

Will this fund be used to encourage "Venues" to also take risks as most venues have to generate revenue, which is more easily achieved if the theatre "production" offered reflects the venues own audience profile and different venues have quite diverse profiles."



Our Response:

There is no one definition of venue and deliberately so. What is certain is that any production needs a venue – albeit that that venue could be a conventional theatre or arts centre, a site-specific space, a street etc. etc. What is being asked of the applicants is that in developing a theatre idea, they spend time and resources, defining what suitable venues for that particular production would be alongside consideration of the nature of the audience that they would wish to attract to that production. We will want to see evidence that partnerships are already being sought or have been found with the people running the sort of venue that has been identified and evidence that due consideration of audience development for that project will be part of the development project.

It is clear from the list in 3.1 that venues can apply for this fund.

“2.3 We like the idea that the fund will help and support the creation of a body of proof that the “production” has the ability to develop and is worthy of further investment, possibly through the National Touring fund, but then got confused by the statement “Without the pressure to produce a finished piece of work” We absolutely applaud the “inbuilt right to fail without censure” which will allow for risk taking, but it does read as though no production or culmination is expected. Will the research and development of the “innovative production” be enough to satisfy the criteria of the fund? If this is really the case then we cannot understand what the fund is for and yet in paragraph 2.4 you state that “Showcases resulting from these developments/ awards would give venue managers the opportunity to engage with the work in progress? Ideally this would be a welcome development but might the artistic process be compromised by the needs of the venues, and how can this be avoided? To further clarify does this mean that money from the fund can be used to pay for putting venue partnerships in place both nationally and internationally? Will organizations be able to use the grant to pay for promotional materials/support?”

The two funds “Theatre Production and National Touring” seem to be linked. Is there a fast tracking element between the two?

Does that mean, that if an organisation has successfully completed the “Theatre Production” lottery application and are happy with the project and feel ready to apply for “National Touring” that this is a fast track extension with a simplified application? It might be difficult to sustain the project, if having completed the Theatre Production research and development you have to wait for months while working up an application for the National Touring fund and await a decision.”



Our Response:

This seems to suggest that further clarity is necessary in the guidance notes. The key is that applicants have an idea that has significant potential to work as a full scale production. This is not intended as grant aid just to experiment. But it is also not a way to gain funding for a small scale production which is why we say that there is no pressure to produce a finished piece of work. Indeed it may be that we need to state clearly that the grant should not result in the creation of a finished piece of work. In each case we need the applicants to consider what would be appropriate development work and in many cases a showing of work in progress to peers will be a valuable part of the process.

In terms of promotional materials/support, it is possible that, particularly with ideas for large scale work that could tour to number one venues, the development of effective promotional material to sell that idea to a number of venues could lead to the means to effectively move forward with a developed idea on a commercial basis. This fund, however, would neither fund the creation of the piece to tour nor the promotional materials to promote the piece on tour. That is the next stage of the production process.

We will not consider applications that do not have the aspiration that what they are working on will eventually result in a production. However, since we are particularly keen to support very new and innovative ideas through this fund, it must be accepted that, in some instances ideas that both the applicant and we, the funders, considered to be ones that were worth developing further might be revealed through this development process not to stand up to the rigour of the development process. In such instances, we would not expect the idea to be taken past this development stage.

Equally support at this stage does not imply automatic support at National Touring level. That will remain a competitive round and, while the point about the need to 'fast track' and move directly on to production with a good idea is well made, it is not a practical one. However, applicants will be clear of the timetable and it is envisaged that a significant number of successful applicants to this fund in one year will become applicants to National Touring the following year for the next stage of their project. Applicants will be advised to plan their projects with this timetable in mind.

"I have a point to make RE 2.3: "the development of new exciting proposals". As an independent dance artist I am currently only able to make ONE ACW application for making work per annum. Inevitably this will be dance as this the area in which I am wanting to make headway. However I am also very interested in driving collaborative ventures which involve the meeting of text and body. So for instance I am

liaising with a writer from the National Theatre in London and also Sarah Argent has expressed a desire to co-direct/devise a non verbal show with me. However, currently funding guidelines make it difficult for me to invest in either of these projects. I suggest that it should be possible to re write the guidelines to encourage artists to apply for funding more than once per annum if the work is developing another form. In this way I think we would see artists able to cross forms making a more fluid and sustainable culture for independents and contributing to the development of the forms."

Our Response:

This applicant has not understood that individual artists are not eligible to apply for this fund. We would welcome applications for collaborations between individual artists and a venue or production company but it is the venue or the production company that will be the applicant. This is in recognition that an individual artist will not have the resources to plan and then create and undertake a production and tour. It is not impossible that an individual artist may have the skills necessary to lead such activity but he or she would need to set up a production company in order to do so – and then would be eligible to apply.

"In addition to the positive response I gave to this proposed fund at the SW regional committee I'd also like to make the following personal response:

1. I wholeheartedly support the intention and aims of this scheme, particularly in relation to supporting, and developing, the creation of theatrical work by independent producers in order to help redress the situation you refer too in 1.2 as the 'top-heavy' infrastructure.

Not only to develop a variety of independent theatrical voices, but also develop potential Wales based collaborators/partners for Theatr Genedlaethol and National Theatre Wales.

Of course the problem of 'variable quality' is less easy to address. While I personally believe that these proposals have the potential to address some of the contributing factors, we should be mindful that even with the best resourcing the output of any company, whatever its scale, may be considered variable.

However, I do feel that these proposals, by implicating presenting venues in the development process, does reduce the scope for the venues to distance themselves from any perceived shortcomings in future presentation of resultant work.

I think that one major outcome of the establishment of the National Theatre of Wales, with its consistent success in selling out its shows, is to prove that there is an audience

'out there' for theatre throughout Wales. I believe that this is, at least in part, due to the perception on the part of the public that there has been a degree of planning, commitment and co-operation between various stakeholders, an approach reflected in these proposals.

So, yes I believe there is 'genuine potential' for significant audience development, and equally importantly, providing additional, domestically produced work for audiences engaged by NTW or TG after they have moved on to pastures new

Point 3 - I'd be careful here - don't want to see a situation where an eligible applicant (venue in Wales) funds the development of work by a partner from outside Wales, which then fails to be produced here. There is a danger that the 'demonstrable benefit' may be that 'they have something to learn from us'.

P.s. 3.3 is grammatically incorrect

Can I clarify whether Cardiff presenters/producers will be eligible? Only ask due to the mention of 'Arts Outside Cardiff' funding, and the stipulation in the proposed touring scheme that tours with a Cardiff venue must also have another in the S. Wales region outside Cardiff.

Would there be a cap on the number of grants that originate from or involving any particular individual or organisation? If the application process for individual practitioners is through partnership with a host organisation then there are some that have historically been more appropriate and geared up for such a way of working. Obviously the intention of the scheme would be to geographically distribute funding as widely as possible, but with a limited number of available appropriate partners certain organisations are likely to be approached by several individuals or companies."

Our Response:

We need to note the point about ensuring that there is a demonstrable benefit to the artists and audiences in Wales.

We need to amend in 3.3 (An exception to this might, however, be made where such companies could demonstrate the need to develop a particularly exciting collaboration an exception might be made). We can do this by dropping the final five words in the sentence.

Cardiff presenters and producers will be eligible.

We need flexibility in relation to the number of applications an organisation

can make. Equally we need to be sure that the organisation has the capacity to act as a full collaborator in each successful application and does not become merely the conduit for a large number of artists to apply for funding.

RESPONDENTS TO CONSULTATION:

Cyfarwyddwr Ysgol Theatr Maldwyn
Bridgend County Borough Council
Torch Theatre
Nicolas Young, The Riverfront
Newport City Council
Theatr Mwldan
Clwyd Theatr Cymru Theatre for Young People
Circuit
John Rowley
Sherman Cymru
Jem Treays, RWCMD
Richard Huw Morgan
RCT
Theatr Bara Caws
Borough Theatre
Theatr Iolo
Creu Cymru
Powys Arts Forum
Patricia Aithie