

LCA 18 September 2020 - Scotland Q&A session

Clive helps to pull together criteria/guidance, works with Scottish Govt, Bernie deals with inquiries/how to get people to apply/barriers on applications.

“Will the fund take into account lost freelancer work opportunities as well as permanent job losses? Many producers and promoters in comedy create work for freelancers and without support these opportunities will be lost.”

Clive: A tricky question to start! It will be in the detail of how the business works with freelancers and how they're accounted for. Comes down to whether you've been working with freelancers up to this stage (through Covid) or whether you haven't been operating and freelancers have been getting support elsewhere. Don't want to double count on freelancers. If the business relies on the activity of freelancers there would be a case for that, but if it's different freelancers each time coming in for each event (events which aren't happening now) there will be less of a case. Coming out of this we know we need more information on freelancers, how they work & how many of them there are.

Bernie: We're on a conveyor belt at the moment, there is a fund in the process of being designed for freelancers. Currently looking for partners to work with on this, but there will be further support to come for freelancers.

(ASCA have expressed an interest in being partners)

"One of our limited by shares companies was awarded the pivotal fund but it was used for one aspect of our business. Can we apply with a different Limited by Shares company for our year-round venue part of our business?"

Clive: All businesses are able to apply. The challenge will be in what the business is applying for. Criteria is extensive, particularly that linked to cashflow deficits. One business cannot apply for support for costs carried by another business. We have to ensure that the right accounting & reporting is being done for the activity. Test is that you need to hit the criteria.

"Do you have any tips on refining our application to ensure it is seen in the best possible light by Creative Scotland panels? Is there any specifics in each section that are key to a successful application?"

Clive: The test will be whether or not you hit the criteria. I used to write applications, and used to think there was a hidden thing you had to hit, but it all comes down to whether or not you fulfil the criteria. This fund is trying to stop insolvency & job losses for venues/organisations that are considered to be culturally significant in Scotland. We're still working on how these applications will be assessed, but we believe that both criteria will be weighted equally - need to be both culturally

significant AND in need for money/at risk of insolvency. Want to make clear that there is no assumption in this process that comedy is not culturally insignificant.

Bernie: Bottom line is please apply! Aware of social media inquiries & coverage and how Creative Scotland is seen with comedy. I go away and look at application data, and we get so so few from the comedy sector. Aware that if you don't see comedy in the fund's descriptions etc, there are barriers to entry, but we don't get enough from the comedy sector & CS need them to build up the evidence of how the sector works and what it needs.

"Can comedy producers apply? People that run regular gigs but don't run a venue?"

Clive: Yes - the criteria talks about the stages of making culture to happen. Part of that is the venues, part of that is the organisations that enable it to happen, part of that is the supply chain. Will obviously have to hit the criteria, but definitely eligible under being a business that enables artistic activity to happen.

Bernie: Looking at other artforms, there will be equivalent producers working in other artforms who will be eligible to apply (e.g. in theatre etc.)

"How can ASCA & the LCA best support applications? There aren't that many people with experience of filling in CS applications in Comedy"

Best things are brevity, clarity, and not to feel like it's about persuasion - it's about the facts. Like applying for a job - some people will just say the questions back, but we're looking for evidence e.g. 'What are you doing about equality & diversity?' Don't want to know that you think it's important, but what have you done (previously) on this question (working with performers from diverse backgrounds, signing up to a campaign etc.). Not enough space to make a compelling argument, so make it focussed, factual, and evidence based, that's what makes a difference.

Bernie: Aware of tight deadline for this process, especially if you're new to CS applications. Longer term, possibly a role for ASCA and Creative Scotland to do some sessions around what CS are looking for/how to fill them in. About the general application process, not about specific funds etc.. Can bring examples of good and bad ways of applications. Would be keen for CS to demystify the process.

Clive: Data & factual approach is most useful. The LCA's #SaveLiveComedy survey report was incredibly useful & a good example of showing how the sector works, what's important & what's needed. It sets out the breadth of the industry & sets out a case for further funding.

Bernie: Absolutely, we need evidence. ASCA & the LCA have a great role to play here to benefit the industry.

“Question about aggregated business - we’re a full year round comedy club & exist because of comedy, but also have other rooms/spaces that we have taken on (e.g. to facilitate the Fringe) but that have other elements of the business operating in them. Comedy is the hardest hit sector, but don’t have time in 5 days to pull out the information specific to comedy from the rest of the business.”

Clive: the fund is intended to support businesses, not aspects of businesses. If an activity is carried out as part of a wider business, we want to look at the whole business. Fund is there to stop job losses & threats of insolvency. If we’re using public sector money, we need to see the bigger picture of that business & that the artistic activity won’t otherwise survive.

e.g. if a business wanted funding for a nightclub through this fund, we’d want to look at the whole business that owned it and whether the rest of the business is in a position to support the nightclub. How would public money be used to keep this nightclub open or can the rest of the business keep the nightclub open?

“How are applications assessed? What’s the procedure like?”

Clive: We’re still designing this, most of the staff at CS spend their time assessing applications. But this will be slightly different as it’s a different sort of fund (e.g. being about hardship). There will be a dedicated team put together to work through applications.

First will be simple - have you filled everything out and ticked all the boxes you need to? Then the officers assessing applications will have prompts - have they answered this question correctly? Then there will be some sort of aggregated grading/ranking system, followed by a review structure/panel. This panel won’t look at assessing individual applications, but will look at reports on geography, who would be getting funding, any particular diversity & inclusion issues/trends. Then the panel will look at who makes the criteria to receive funding, then if/how they can make it work in the budget. That panel then make the final decisions on who’s in and out. Suggested this will be 1st week of November - we want this to be as soon as possible but we have to have an effective assessment process & that does take time.

Bernie: Will the Scottish Government need to see the list before it’s confirmed?

Clive: That’s an interesting question, there’s legislation that gives us independence in our decision making, even though they determine policy direction. Given that this is a FM announced fund, we will be working with them throughout the process. We’ll seek to include them, but at the moment they won’t have or need an ability to change anything/no stage where they look at individual applications and make those decisions. They’ll be a partner throughout the process.

“Are you expecting to see reopening activity in cashflow, or just covering costs of staying closed to March?”

Clive: it's a tough one, one of the biggest difficulties with these funds is predicting what will happen in terms of reopening. We want people to be realistic - that means striking the balance between the pessimistic (second wave etc.) and the optimistic - there may be ways of trading prior to that.

If everyone says they're not going to open until March (and so deficits are larger) we won't be able to support as many people/organisations. Need to try and support as many people as possible. We'll be look at whether people are being realistic with their cashflow forecast. Every time we launch a fund we launch it with the best knowledge we have at that time, then things undoubtedly change.

Bernie: There's nothing in the fund guidance that talks about reopening. Traditionally there might be specifics on budget (e.g. what you can & can't ask for). This is much more open, partly to allow for different types of organisations. Whereas CS's independent cinema fund asks about reopening costs, this one doesn't. Realism about whether or not you can reopen is important.

“Is there a way in the narrative to explain the ‘realism’ for reopening? Will there be some bargaining on the amount if people have asked for ‘too much’?”

Clive: That's the worst part of the job. Best case scenario is that the perfect amount of people apply for the funds and the perfect amount needed that sits within the budget. Very rare that's the case, so then we work out how we prioritise things. Never easy. We'll need to make clear how we're prioritising applications & stick to how we make those decisions around prioritisation - we're still working on how those priorities will be decided.

Bernie: it's not necessarily 'x or nothing' - CS reserve the right to offer you a lower amount. Anticipate it being oversubscribed, but haven't got a figure of how much they think will be asked for. Won't be peanuts (money given has to have an affect), but could offer a lower, practical amount that will help you.

Bernie: Comedy doesn't come in to Open Fund that much, but it's open to all arts forms. Mainly Lottery funding (does have some restrictions) but some government funding coming in (fewer restrictions). Need to be projects for the broader public good - e.g. workshops in deprived communities. Would definitely encourage comedy industry to apply for that!

Katy: Can we set up as Q&A session for the open fund for this sector?

Bernie: Happy to be involved, would bring in someone from the artforms department to do that with me. I'm involved before applications go in/before

assessment is made. Wants to demystify the processes as much as possible and make routes in as easy as possible.

Clive: Top level of importance to CS is public benefit. How can we use public money to support cultural activity that brings cultural benefit to the public? Support from CS is to ensure that 'good stuff' is made & created and gets out there. Always with the eye to generating public benefit. That's key to work out how best to write an application.

Bernie: Youth Arts Fund just announced. Based on a bureaucratically funded past programme on benefits of youth music. Moved some emergency funds into this but now wider than music - all about youth arts. How can comedy look at engaging with youth? Heads up it's not the easiest of forms to fill out, a lot of reporting etc. around youth engagement, but could be some worthwhile funding there.

“How do we keep up with so many funds?”

Bernie: Cs has a monthly email RE funds, not just CS but also from partners. Twitter's also the key social media to engage with. Sign up for findbusinesssupport.gov.scot - new Scottish Enterprises website to combine all public funding together. Now 3 times a week emails.

<https://opportunities.creativescotland.com/> - Opportunities website is a bulletin board - advertising space for arts/culture. For developmental opportunities - e.g. someone can come and get something - commissions, jobs, workshops, masterclasses, funding opportunities. Currently fewer opportunities than normal, but some useful things on there.