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Creative Scotland - Spending Decisions and Outcomes: Submission of Written Evidence

The Centre for the Moving Image (CMI) currently incorporates Scotland’s leading independent cinema, Filmhouse, the world’s longest continually running film festival, the Edinburgh International Film Festival, the Filmhouse Café Bar, and from April 2014, the home of independent film in Aberdeen, the Belmont Filmhouse.

Established in 2010 and with bases in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, the CMI is a national organisation working across Scotland (both directly and collaboratively) seeking to be at the forefront of the development of a vibrant and successful film industry and culture across Scotland and beyond.

The CMI is a founding member of Scottish Film Limited (along with Dundee Contemporary Arts, Eden Court, Glasgow Film and Regional Screen Scotland), is working in partnership with Hopscotch and Digiicult in delivering the Scottish Film Talent Network, is a founding member of the Edinburgh Cultural Venues Group, and is a founding member of Festivals Edinburgh.

CMI has been delivering several major programmes over the last three years: the national film education programme, Understanding Cinema in partnership with the Cinematheque Francaise; the McLaren 2014 Programme, a Scotland wide programme of screenings, events, and animation workshops, delivered in partnership with the National Film Board of Canada; and, Cinema of Childhood, a UK wide tour of film screenings, talks and events connected to Mark Cousins’ film A Story of Children and Film.

EIFF runs year round talent development programmes, including in 2014 and 2015, the EIFF Talent Lab, the EIFF Network, Composers Lab and Animation Lab.

The CMI is pioneering new ways of delivering films to audiences, with the introduction of the Filmhouse Player in 2012 and the Clipster DCP Suite underpinning its Digital Cinema Services unit which came onstream in early 2014.
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The CMI programmes cinemas in Stornoway, Musselburgh and Hawick.

The CMI has partnered with Marketing Edinburgh to form Edinburgh Film. This collaboration has already delivered the Film in the City programme of events and outdoor screenings in 2014 and 2015.

The CMI is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It generates more than half of its income through its trading activities (box office, café bar, sponsorship); it is increasing the level of private giving; and has secured increased levels of funding from a wide range of public funders. The CMI is one of Creative Scotland’s Regularly Funded Organisations (RFOs) for 2015-18.

We welcome the opportunity to submit evidence to the Education and Culture Committee on this issue and having considered the issues for discussion we would like to make the following comments:

1. **The extent to which the new strategic and operational changes have helped Creative Scotland move towards meeting its objectives and rebuilding its relationship with the sector.**

   Our view from the perspective of an external partner and funded organisation is that this change is still ongoing and that further clarity is needed on the substance of these strategic and operational changes.

   A Film Sector Review was undertaken in 2013, with the Report being published in early 2014. The CMI was consulted as part of the review. The Report was subsequently followed up by the publication for consultation of a Draft Film Strategy in June 2014, followed by the publication of the final strategy document *Creative Scotland on Screen: Film Strategy 2014-17* in October 2014.

   Our view on *Creative Scotland on Screen: Film Strategy 2014-17* (2014) is that, whilst the general principles are to be welcomed, the document itself does not contain clear enough objectives or deliverables. Though there is reference to the fact that Creative Scotland ‘will translate this strategy into a work-plan and identify clear responsibilities within the team for each element of it’, there has, to date, been no published set of KPIs or measurable objectives.

   As a leading film organisation within Scotland, undertaking a range of high level activities which link closely with the Film Strategy, as well as being one of Creative Scotland’s Regularly Funded Organisations, we would welcome more clarity on the specifics of these aims to enable us to have a better understanding of the goals that Creative Scotland is aiming to achieve for the Scottish film sector. We would then hope to work in partnership with Creative Scotland, wherever possible, to help achieve these aims.

2. **How Creative Scotland will ensure it achieves value for money in delivering its priorities for investment.**

   Firstly, we feel it must be clearly established what is meant by the Scottish Government in terms of ‘value for money’ and ‘priorities for investment’.

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A naïve approach to value for money (such as measuring Creative Scotland spend per admission) would be extremely detrimental to the industry as a whole. For example, the success and importance of the richness and breadth of both the programme and the experience of the Edinburgh International Film Festival for audiences, international filmmaker guests, industry delegates and participants in our renowned talent labs, cannot be measured by pure numbers. However it is unclear how Creative Scotland assesses the qualitative as well as quantitative aspects of funded activity.

For example, within Creative Scotland on Screen: Film Strategy 2014-17 (2014) there was no reference to the cultural, economic, educational or social value, benefits or impacts to Scotland in hosting an international film festival such as EIFF.

To date under the new reporting process, whilst we have been asked to submit detailed statistics on topics including audience numbers, financial spend, and sustainability, we have not been asked to provide any qualitative detail on the artistic or creative substance of our programme.

Secondly, in terms of specific funding decision-making processes, as a Regularly Funded Organisation, we feel that the process could be improved through a more cohesive approach, such as a more visibly connecting funding application and decision making processes with stated strategic objectives.

An example of a lack of cohesion in 2014 was that the Creative Scotland Draft Film Strategy was published just one week before the deadline for the submission of the RFO applications, for funding from 1st April 2015 to March 2018. The actual Film Strategy was not published until the week before funding decisions were announced to the sector in October 2014.

Clearly, this sequence made it impossible for the CMI to respond to the ambitions of the Film Strategy, but it is also unclear how Creative Scotland were able to make major funding decisions on future activity in the film sector in the absence of the Film Strategy.

So, closer consideration of the timescales would have helped to ensure that we, and others, could have linked more closely with the strategy and its long term aims.

Thirdly, in terms of setting priorities for investment, we are unclear how Creative Scotland differentiates its strategic aims from those of the British Film Institute, which has a UK wide remit. Whilst a collaborative approach between the two organisations is needed, there is the danger of a UK-wide one size fits all approach being applied in Scotland. This ignores the specific ongoing issues relating to the screen sector within Scotland, as well as Scotland’s unique geographical, cultural, political, social, educational and economic profile.

The CMI would therefore welcome further clarity on how Creative Scotland and the BFI’s respective strategies, remits, priorities for investment and funding application and decision-making processes work together to the benefit of audiences, practitioners, and the broader industry in Scotland.
3. **The work Creative Scotland is doing to develop a set of performance measures and how performance is being evaluated in the interim.**

Whilst some improvements have been made the reporting required is still very data heavy, though we do recognise that this review is still ongoing.

In the absence of published KPIs for *Creative Scotland on Screen: Film Strategy 2014-17* (2014) there is currently no opportunity for us to understand how our performance links in with the sector as a whole. As a leader within the sector we would welcome a greater understanding of this, as well as increased opportunities to support the delivery of the strategy and of the wider film sector in Scotland.

4. **The tangible benefits that have been achieved as a direct result of its funding structure and how these influence future funding guidelines and decision-making.**

It is unclear how Creative Scotland balances its strategic, policy making and funding responsibilities. We understand that Creative Scotland was required to introduce a revised funding application process for what became Regular Funded Organisations (previously known as Foundation organisations).

In trying to be rigorously fair in the application, assessment and decision making process, Creative Scotland removed the opportunity to discuss applications with applicants. This meant that beyond responding to set of specific ‘questions of clarification’ Creative Scotland did not discuss the CMI’s application with the applicant in the 4 months between submission and decision.

However, given the importance of the CMI to the future success of film culture in Scotland, this seems odd. There was no consideration of the impact of a reduced funding settlement on the CMI and no discussion with the CMI of that impact. And of course the detail of the application was hindered in not having Creative Scotland’s Film Strategy published until after the event.

So, for the future, we would recommend that:

- The relevant strategies are published ahead of any funding application process.
- Creative Scotland allows discussions with applicants about their applications during the assessment process.
- If Creative Scotland is considering offering a lower than proposed settlement, applicants should be invited to detail the resultant impacts.

5. **How effectively Creative Scotland works alongside and complements other agencies, such as Skills Development Scotland and Scottish Enterprise, to grow the creative industries.**

The then Scottish Executive published *Scotland’s Culture* in January 2006, which stated that:
'All those with a role in the provision of culture need to work together – across the public, private and voluntary sectors. There will be a need to increase the commitment of these sectors to partnership working and joined-up delivery.'<p>(p.11)</p>

However, it is difficult to establish whether partnership working across agencies has improved in the past 10 years. <i>Creative Scotland on Screen: Film Strategy 2014-17</i> (2014) does not detail how Creative Scotland intends to work alongside agencies such as Skills Development Scotland and Scottish Enterprise, nor does it make detailed reference to the substance of any other collaborations which have a specific role to play in the successful delivery of the strategy.

An example of the lack of a joined up approach is demonstrated by the process for the recent Creative Scotland call for funding applications to the ‘Screen Skills Fund’ which was designed to support the following key priority areas linked to skills across the screen sector:

- Advanced career development, building entrepreneurship and leadership skills.
- Business development and management seminar and workshop programmes.
- Bespoke skills development, including traineeships and apprenticeships.
- Access routes into the industry focusing on employability, encouraging and increasing workforce diversity and emerging talent development programmes.

The deadline for applications to this fund was 14 May 2015. However, Skills Development Scotland did not publish their <i>Creative Skills Investment Plan</i> until 26 June 2015, so there was no way in which funding applications could demonstrate a cohesive approach in line with the strategy.

Once again thank you for the opportunity to provide constructive comment on these areas of review. Please do not hesitate to contact us further in the event that any supplementary information is required.

Kind regards,

Ken Hay
Chief Executive
Centre for the Moving Image