

What should be the Scottish Government's immediate priorities in supporting the culture sector's recovery through Budget 2022-23?

A rich and integrated cultural offer will be important to future national wellbeing and prosperity as Scotland emerges from the past 18 months and seeks to address longer-term challenges to our way of life. This evidence we bring forward, recommending three immediate funding priorities, is set in the context of the sector-wide recommendations of Culture Counts and the Events Industry Advisory Group which we help to develop, and collaborative discussions with Creative Scotland and sector development bodies across the range of art forms and sectors we work with. These recommendations apply not only to central Government policy but also to all relevant national agencies and NDPBs.

1. *Resilience and change investment*

- For core-funded organisations, the lifting of previous grant conditions continues to be an essential measure to enable organisations to be agile in planning on what remain much shorter and more uncertain timescales.
- Emergency funding in 2020 aimed to limit redundancies and insolvencies. Looking to recovery and renewal in 2022, a priority should be for public funding approaches to learn from the adaptations and innovations of 2021 to support resilience and change rather than overstretch as the culture sector seeks to rebuild sustainably. For example, several major Fringe producers in Edinburgh were able to create new, less intensive settings to support artists in producing live work and restarting livelihoods thanks to Scottish Government covid adaptation funding, and this offers potential models for the future.
- Given the 18-month gap in activity for most live artists, stimulus measures to support the ability of creatives and creative organisations to rebuild will also be important - such as rates relief and incentives to attract match funding from sponsors, donors and other supporters.

2. *Creative development pathways*

- With fewer people actively working in live culture at present after the scarring of Covid closures, it is a critical priority that pathways for creation, production and participation across Scotland should be rebuilt. Without this as a priority, Scotland will have a long-term lag in new work and creative opportunities. Public funding for co-commissioning and co-production of new work could help generate more viable livelihoods for selected creatives with lower risks borne by individuals.
- A pool of skilled technicians and suppliers also needs to be re-established and upskilled. This creates a need and an opportunity through investment programmes to help more young people – whose jobs have been most disadvantaged by covid closures - get back into the labour market.
- Scotland-wide specialist supply chains are fragile because of their small scale and could be made more resilient through a support scheme to offset the cost for local organisations collaborating with them, possibly taking inspiration from an 'Innovation Vouchers' style mechanism.

3. *Community creativity capacity*

- Despite operational constraints, releasing grantees from activity targets in 2020 opened up opportunities to work in more focused and tailored ways to support isolated and vulnerable people.
- Much has been learnt about the value of these approaches. In our partnerships with community organisations, themes that often come through are the importance of small-scale personal interventions and long-term engagement.
- If expanding community creativity opportunities for wellbeing is an important objective in recovery, these lessons need to be recognised and resourced with quality and depth of engagement prioritised over volume.
- In our experience, projects in these areas can be attractive to donors but not without an initial foundational grant commitment.

Do you agree with UNESCO that “a degree of restructuring is inevitable” [1] as the sector recovers from COVID? If so, what approach should the Scottish Government adopt?

For individuals and organisations in the creative sector to survive and thrive, we agree that there will inevitably need to be a balance of consolidation and innovation.

Scottish Government policy should look to prioritise support for those who are demonstrating a future-facing sense of **purpose, values and ambition** through:

- demonstrating a clear sense of their fundamental purpose and value that creates resilience
- committing to develop new models achieving a balance of cultural, social, economic and environmental sustainability
- working to adapt and renew in ways that chime with future needs for cultural wellbeing, social bonds, and thriving livelihoods

A crisis can also trigger new ways of thinking – should the Scottish Government rethink how it supports the culture sector?

From our experience of working with national funders and stakeholders as part of a mixed economy of supporters, we see the following principles as critical:

- **Portfolio approach** – there needs to be a portfolio approach across the whole country with system level thinking about who is best place to support creative pipelines of opportunity at individual, organisational, local, national and international levels.
- **Long-term funding** – there is growing evidence for how much difference sustained long-term relationships and planning make to the depth and sustainability of cultural outcomes, and a foundational commitment of public funding over the long-term is critical, as set out in the following section about the opportunities of multi-year spending reviews.
- **Supporting cultural enterprise** - cultural experiences have been recognised as an important part of recovery for individual wellbeing and vibrant communities, and maximising inclusion requires income generation to subsidise free and low cost access so future culture sector support needs to take business models into account.
- **Sustained approach to under-representation** - There are additional challenges for people from outwith majority and middle class communities in developing and sustaining creative careers. To change this profile for the better, a sustained pipeline of support is important. Focused and co-ordinated support to provide long-term pathways for individuals, albeit limited in number, may prove more effective in growing a diverse new generation of cultural leaders than higher-volume interventions that do not systematically address gaps and transition points.

Specifically, are there opportunities to develop a more strategic approach through, for example, the medium-term financial strategy, a multi-year spending review and the National Performance Framework?

- **Multi-year spending review:** after more than a decade of one-year spending reviews, the benefits for resilience and innovation of being able to offer longer-term settlements would be significant. An example of the transformational potential can be seen in the [Platforms for Creative Excellence programme](#) which made an in-principle commitment of five years in partnership between Edinburgh’s Festivals, City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Government. Year Two of the programme saw extreme disruption due to Covid but the [interim external evaluation](#) has remarked on how critical the long-term nature of the programme has been to enable the strategic shifts that became even more necessary during the pandemic. Culture and creativity should also be capitalised on more in future commitments to long-term innovation programmes e.g. building on City Region Deals. In Edinburgh & South East Scotland this has levered up important partner investment for example through the AHRC funded [Creative Informatics](#) programme which includes our festivals as partners.

- **Medium-term financial strategy:** recovery in the culture sector is widely expected to be a five-year process, especially for town and city centres, and it will be important for the Scottish Government to look at the positive role that could be played by ongoing fiscal stimulus and tax incentives that are under devolved competence. The SNP made a 2021 manifesto commitment to establish a ‘percentage for the arts’ scheme where 1% of funding for major public buildings would go towards community art commissions – the resulting proceeds could be much more than Creative Scotland’s annual budget and this is a potentially transformative opportunity that must be a priority to develop. A key guiding principle for us is that such a scheme should operate more like Lottery endowments than like Section 75 capital investments around building developments – because the biggest need for communities is ongoing revenue for participatory activities. Such a scheme could also support approaches that enhance environmental sustainability of the sector’s practices and cultural infrastructure.
- **Local authority powers:** across Scotland, spending on culture by local authorities as a non-statutory area has reduced dramatically in real terms over the past decade. If as a nation we want to support cultural opportunities for a wellbeing society, local authorities should have access to more ways to determine revenue raising and income generation measures to halt and reverse this trend.
- **National Performance Framework:** at its last update in 2018 the national performance framework added the national outcome on culture which is vital to reflecting its importance in a flourishing Scotland. We welcome the current conversation by the national partnership on culture about where measures can better recognise and value the role of diverse cultural activity in a successful Scotland with opportunities for all to flourish. While this is a useful focus point, it must also be remembered that the positive national impact of a thriving cultural life is ultimately cross-cutting and intrinsic. A healthy baseline of national investment in creativity is analogous to the country’s commitment to investing in fundamental research, in the knowledge that society benefits from curiosity-driven research even though the applications can’t be predicted.