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Minutes of the Stage Two PEACE IV Review Panel Meeting

Friday 29th September 2017, 2.00pm
SEUPB Offices, Belfast

Project Applicant – Smashing Times Theatre Company
Project Title – Women War and Peace – Vision for the Future Project

In Attendance:	Gina McIntyre	SEUPB (Chair)
	Sean Kelly	MC Panel Member
	Ivan Cooper	MC Panel Member
	Robbie Davis	Independent Member
	James Russell	SEUPB
	Tara McCormick	SEUPB (minutes)

1. Introductions

The Chair welcomed Members to the Stage Two Review Panel meeting of the PEACE IV 2014 – 2020 Programme.

2. Register of Interests/Conflicts of Interest

The Review Panel noted that Ivan Cooper and Freda Manweiler of Smashing Times Theatre Company have met previously but determined this did not represent a conflict of interest.

3. Review

The Chair reminded the panel that the applicant has requested a review on both grounds, i.e –

- (a) The outcome was a decision that no reasonable person would have made on the basis of the information provided to the Steering Committee (SC), and;

- (b) There was a failure in adherence to procedures or systems that materially affected or could have materially affected the decision.

The project was assessed under 7 scoring criteria, with a minimum score of 3/5 required in each. Following assessment and SC consideration, the application failed to score the minimum (3) under three of the criteria, namely;

- (a) Criterion 1: Contribution of the project to the defined results and outputs of the programme,
(b) Criterion 2: Quality of project design, and:
(c) Criterion 3: Quality of cross-border co-operation with demonstrable added value.

The Panel noted the scoring.

The Chair confirmed that in line with Section 4.0 of the Review Procedure, the panel would consider ten-minute presentations from both the applicant and the Joint Secretariat (JS); both parties then joined the meeting.

The Chair introduced the Panel to Mary Moynihan and Freda Manweiler, representing the Smashing Times Theatre Company, and John Greer and Paul Boylan of the SEUPB's JS.

The Chair reminded the applicant that the Review Panel will make a decision based on the reasonableness of the decision made by the SC, and not on the merits of the project.

The Smashing Times representatives proceeded to provide a ten minute PowerPoint presentation which outlined their reasons for requesting a review of the Steering Committee decision. The main points of the presentation were;

- The applicant was appealing on both grounds;
- An overview of the Smashing Times Theatre Company and its experience in peace building, including as a recipient of SEUPB funding since 1999;
- An overview of the organisation's work and recognition across Europe;

- An overview of the partnership behind the Women War and Peace project, composed of Towards Understanding and Healing (TUH), Ulster University, High Wire and An Táin;
- An outline of the project's aims to utilise gender equality as a catalyst in promoting peace building;
- The applicant felt they were offered fewer opportunities for engagement in the low-scoring areas in comparison to extensive SEUPB queries on the project finances, in what was in their view, an unfair process;
- The application was clear in detailing how the participation of 400 individuals (20 groups) from across various cross-border communities in various project activities contributes to the programme outputs;
- In addition, one member of each of the 20 groups will be trained as a community relations ambassador to affect change in their community;
- The assessment expressed concern that some of the interventions were passive in nature. The applicant stressed the intervention is active and participatory; participants are guided through the exhibitions and installations as a means of generating discussion;
- The project interventions represent substantial duration and meaningful engagement;
- The applicant believes the project focus on gender equality resulted in a lower scoring, where gender equality is an indicator of peace, and;
- The project aimed to utilise gender equality in bringing people together, as a medium for collective experience.

The Chair thanked the applicant for their presentation and invited the JS to provide a ten minute verbal response, which included the following main points;

- The project was assessed in a highly competitive call and the introduction of new material to the Review Panel unfairly disadvantages other projects;
- The assessment process is based on the application, supporting documents and points of clarity, and does not include assumptions or un-evidenced information;
- The JS requested clarification on a number of issues including the gender equality focus and the response provided allowed for a robust assessment;

- The applicant was afforded the same amount of feedback as other applications under the call, and the JS must balance requesting information against offering the project development opportunities;
- The SC decided the application provided insufficient evidence on how gender equality could be used as a medium to contribute to the outputs and results of the programme;
- The SEUPB have not discriminated against the applicant for the focus on gender equality in their project; two other applications to the call contain a focus on gender equality and have been successful in their application;
- The information provided in the application did not convince the SC that the project interventions would have a transformative, sustained impact;
- The application cited 85,740 beneficiaries of the project interventions, consisting of 25,000 through publicity and dissemination campaigns and 45,000 through digital media: these figures are estimates, with no supporting evidence their engagement will be meaningful, purposeful or sustained or that it will result in the attitudinal change set out in the results indicators;
- The application does not provide evidence that the workshops, installations and the symposiums would be ongoing or that participants would have multiple engagements, nor that these interventions are sustainable;
- Overall, the project did not provide enough evidence on its methodology to meet the outputs of the call.

The Chair thanked the JS for their presentation, and made the point that the women are a target group in the PEACE 2014 – 2020 Programme.

The applicant again stated their discontent with the level of JS engagement on the project's financial figures in comparison to the engagement offered on the areas which received low scoring.

The applicant went on to state that they have used gender equality and similar interventions towards peace building previously, and asked the Review Panel to consider their television documentary under the memory project .

The Chair clarified that the reasons behind the project are not in doubt, as indicated by the project's successful progress through Stage one assessment, instead the Review Panel is taking account of evidence presented in a highly competitive 2 stage process.

The Smashing Times representatives thanked the Review Panel and then, with the JS representatives, left the meeting.

The Chair opened the meeting up to discussion and the Review Panel made the following comments;

- The applicant did not use the presentation time effectively to appeal the decision of the SC and the presentation slides were too high level to be effective in persuading a change to the scoring;
- The evidence presented for appeal on procedural grounds was based on the fairness of the process rather than the JS adherence to the process;
- The applicant did not see the distinction between the JS seeking clarification on financial information and unfairly providing project development advice through continued opportunity to revise applications;
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- The applicant's point on lower scoring due to the gender focus of the application is a serious issue, which the Review Panel strongly agreed was unfounded;

In relation to the score of 2 awarded to Criterion 1 - Contribution of the project to the defined results and outputs of the programme, the Panel felt the presentation had not presented them with sufficient reasoning to amend the scoring. The scoring was **upheld**.

In relation to the score of 2 awarded to Criterion 2 – Project Design, the Panel felt the presentation had not presented them with sufficient reasoning to amend the scoring. The scoring was **upheld**.

The Panel agreed the scoring against Criterion 3 - Quality of cross-border co-operation with demonstrable added value was not addressed by the applicant during the meeting and therefore the scoring would not be amended. The scoring was **upheld**.

The Chair thanked the Review Panel for its work and closed the meeting.