

# Magnetic North Seed Fund Application Form

## Tell us about you and your work

My name is Fin Ross Russell. I am a community-focused theatre-maker who believes in the power of the arts to make a positive impact on people's lives. In a sector where organisations and artists prioritise either a high-quality end product or a high-quality process of making said product, I have experienced projects on which I have been a key part of achieving both. This journey to make the best possible work that has a positive effect on the creatives, audiences and participants who engage with it represents the central pillar of my artistic practice.

As part of my work, I run a company called Island Life Productions who work with emerging artists and members of the public to create high-quality art. Since becoming legally established in October 2019, Island Life Productions have produced an exciting range of projects including podcasts, short films, public dance videos, online competitions and a choose-your-own audio adventure. Most of these projects have been digitally focused as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and a desire to therefore make the most of limited resources by showcasing our work online, making it freely available to a global audience for an unlimited period of time. This was a difficult artistic transition to make but one that ultimately played to my strengths as somebody keen to explore new platforms and formats for storytelling experiences which engage audiences in ways beyond those that traditional theatre does.

Now that pandemic-related restrictions are gone however, I am keen to begin creating live work again and taking advantage of the slow increase of theatre development opportunities becoming available to early career practitioners like myself. Theatre is expensive to make so opportunities like this are the only way to create live work whilst professionally recognising everybody involved in making it

(297 words)

## Tell us what you would do with the grant

I would use this grant to begin development of an original family show called Chance Would Be a Fine Thing.

Chance Would Be A Fine Thing is a fantastical and adventurous coming of age story – set in the central belt of Scotland. Eleanora is a quirky, yet lonely teenager. She speaks in riddles, she has her own routine and lives quite happily in comfortable isolation. That is until she is whisked from her reality (which just so happens to be a whimsical landscape) and is dropped into the world as we know it. In this foreign land of Scotland, Eleanora must adapt and fend for herself, but little does she know, that she's about to embark on the greatest adventure of her life. The story takes Eleanora on a journey through the central belt, making pit stops at Linlithgow Palace, the Union Canal, Callander Park, the Falkirk Wheel and, of course, The Kelpies! She has many lessons to learn from the characters she meets along the way, but she also has lessons to teach.

The show is the brain-child of Falkirk creative Mirren Wilson and with the grant support, we intend to develop the piece from initial idea to rehearsed reading stage by workshopping the piece three times with the actors involved. This will allow three opportunities to review the script and fine-tune the script based on what works better live. After presenting the work as a rehearsed reading, we intend to use the momentum gained from this development opportunity to apply for production funding. As part of this process, we would take on-board the feedback from an invited audience of industry peers so that we can finesse our vision ahead of the next round of development.

(287 words)

**Tell us how you would spend the money by giving a rough budget outline (£4,500)**

- Fin (Producer & Director) (£1,700)
- Mirren (Writer) (£1,700)
- Kirsty (Actor) (£450)
- Shelley (Actor) (£450)
- Rehearsal & Performance Space (£200)

We have calculated the figures for Producer, Director, Writer and Performers based on either Equity or ITC-recommended rates for each respective discipline based on the amount of time required to fulfil each role in preparation for the play's rehearsed reading. We have also included a figure for rehearsal and performance space that is intentionally high should the need arise to rent a space for the workshop and rehearsed reading.

**Tell us how this will benefit your artistic development**

The project would give myself a vital opportunity to continue my development as a director with a piece that is not only original but as a family show is very different to anything I have worked on previously. In turn, this would give me a context to see other family shows, speak to relevant companies, ask fellow directors for advice and end this period of development feeling more confident in my ability to direct family theatre.

It would also give Mirren the opportunity to develop as a writer by giving her her first sole professional writing credit. Although she has been writing for several years and was a member of the Strange Town Young Writers' Group, Mirren has been working hard to get a play of hers put on. As somebody who has collaborated with Mirren in the past, I know that this is the perfect first play of hers to be developed and for her to use this as a catalyst for soliciting advice from fellow writers, honing her technique and writing a play that is not only very accessible but true to her personal identity. This project isn't just her story, it's a story about rural Central Belt communities that are grossly underrepresented in Scottish Theatre.

Finally, if selected to receive this support, this project will be produced under the Island Life Productions branding. This would represent the company's first theatre show since legal establishment as a Community Interest Company in 2019. This in turn, would give the company a reputation and a record for supporting early career theatre-makers (writers,

directors, producers) on the next stage of their artistic journeys. This would in turn give us further support and momentum towards applying for future funding not only for this project but for future theatre projects as well.

(299 words)