

Summary of the evaluation of DOEN's Exchange Facility

for the International Culture & Media Program

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January 2023

The purpose of this short evaluation is to bring a qualitative insight into DOEN's Exchange Facility that they have been organizing among and between partners and their ecosystems since 2011. The evaluation looked at impact, meaning, and value that partners attribute to the Exchange Facility. How can this additional source of funding, designed to facilitate not only mobility, but also aiming for more connections, exchanges and deepening of knowledge between DOEN partners, be remodeled today to better support the needs of its current and future partners? This document is a summary of the evaluation (September 2022 - January 2023) and explains what the facility is about and gives recommendations to the Foundation for the short and mid terms.

The partners we spoke to all seem to agree that the Exchange Facility is a refreshing tool to apply to, as it doesn't require a heavy administrative back end and the response to it is quite swift. It helps unplanned projects to emerge, and fosters collaborations between countries and organizations that work in the same field. According to the partners, the Exchange Facility is valuable because it supports them in:

- Shaping their practice, focusing on the process rather than on the end product (this relates mostly to individual artists);
- Broadening organizational maturity, perspectives, and strategies;
- Starting new programming in their organizations based on what they witnessed or experienced in their exchange trip and sometimes in collaboration with the partner they visited;
- Strengthening relationships between each other or with the group they traveled with and this building friendships along the way;
- Finding common grounds with their partners and thus strengthening their position and conviction in the work they do.

Through the evaluation, we also asked the selected grantees to reflect on challenges. Travel and communication between grantees represent logistical challenges and concerns that jeopardize the value and the quality of the implementation of the exchange projects.

However, these are concerns that should be resolved ahead of time between the partners themselves as DOEN usually provides the platform for these exchanges to happen, and is less involved in the operational side of a trip.

Following various meetings with the grantees and with the International Culture and Media team, the evaluator developed a series of recommendations for the Foundation to look at in the short and mid terms.

a. Actively explain new possibilities within the facility

As the Foundation is embarking on a multiannual plan with new directions, there is a need to actively explain the new possibilities that are open to the grantees, whether it's about cross-sector exchange, which all partners are interested in, or changing the way mobility trips are requested within program or institutional funding.

The Foundation needs to connect partners working in different sectors with each other for cross-sector exchange to flourish. It could also consider giving even more flexibility to the

partners when they request funding for a mobility trip. It could be in the form of a “reserve” which they can use or not, based on their needs and ability to extend their networking in a given year or project.

b. Conduct closing conversations instead of solely relying on written reports

As the partners like to share their experiences with the Foundation and keep their communication channels open and active, it is important to create a space for conversation following an exchange. The grantees are currently requested to send a narrative and financial report by the end of a trip, which sometimes follows a certain template and at other times it doesn't. Developing a new short template with limited (reporting) questions might make it easier for the partners to submit their feedback in a timely manner, in addition to making room for them to share more in-depth thoughts during a closing call.

c. Organize regular meetings amongst the partners

In order to create opportunities between the partners, connect them with each other, and disseminate information (such as changes or additions) regarding the Exchange Facility, DOEN could initiate regular conversations between the partners and the Foundation, and generate discussions and potentially working groups as well amongst the ecosystem. These meetings could be organized by the partners themselves (on a rolling basis), through an external consultant, or by the team themselves if time allows.

d. Expand the scope and duration of the support

The Exchange Facility can be presented as an extra tool to support what the partners need. It could be a stipend for a studio-based artist, a fund to seek other markets or organize a capsule project, support to hire specific expertise, and so on. Expanding the scope of this facility seems like a positive and sustainable response to many of the challenges the partners are facing which emerge as they experiment and work gradually in their respective countries. Adding more flexibility to the scope of the exchange can also be considered like a “reserve” that they ask for in the beginning of their funding application (similar to recommendation a) and confirm once they have more clarity on what their needs are.

e. Review the format of the support

The format of the current Exchange Facility excludes practitioners and partners that are part of the ecosystem and doesn't allow them to receive the support of the facility. There seems to be a need to review the current format and adapt it for more inclusivity amongst new and existing partners who are part of the extended network. It's important to do so without creating competitive systems such as other mobility grants schemes but by keeping it within the ecosystem of the Foundation.

In conclusion, there is a consensus amongst the partners that the Exchange Facility was useful to them in growing their skill set and practice as individuals or organizations (or both sometimes). It is one to nurture. With the new multiannual strategy, a new team taking over the International Culture and Media team at DOEN, and a series of recommendations, there is a need to review the way this facility operates. Format, duration, and scope matter to the partners. Perhaps there is a need to change the key words that define the Exchange Facility: physical mobility and exchange could give way to learning.