



the arts
council
as chomhairle
ealaíon

Making Great Art Work

Three-year plan
2020–2022

Making Great Art Work sets out a framework for the development of the arts in Ireland for the decade 2016–2025.

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Young participants of *Story, Rhythm and Rhyme* with Deirdre Ryan during Cork World Book Fest, Cork City Library. Photograph by Clare Keogh.

The first three-year plan 2017–2019, saw the Arts Council start the journey towards implementing *Making Great Art Work*.

Making Great Art Work clearly demonstrates the Arts Council's resolve to support artists to make excellent work which is enjoyed and valued, while enabling more people to enjoy high-quality arts experiences. No other state body plays as important a role in supporting the arts in Ireland. As the expert development agency, we have a responsibility to make more powerful and central the place of the arts in Irish life. We also have a responsibility to advocate strongly for the vital role played by the arts in the well-being and quality of life of all our people.

The three-year plan 2017–2019 focused on what we had to do to carry out our remit as a development agency, recognising that in the first years the Arts Council itself had to change considerably to ensure we were 'fit for purpose' to fulfil the ambitions of *Making Great Art Work*.

We set about reviewing our funding structures, as well as our organisation and business processes. We introduced a new funding framework, which we will continue to improve and streamline over the next three years. We developed new systems to better capture and use data and evidence to support our decision-making and advocacy work. We introduced new programmes and policies in the areas of diversity, equality and human rights, targeting support to particular communities. We renewed and developed our relationship with local authorities and reviewed how we

supported arts centres across the country. And we began the important work of addressing artists' pay and conditions.

This new three-year plan 2020–2022 will continue much of the work started over the last three years: refining it, improving it and further developing it. We have also identified a series of steps we can take to build on the work already commenced, along with new areas of focus.

We live in a republic of equals, where the arts are for all. But there are still communities in Ireland where access to the arts continues to be a challenge. Barriers to participation in the arts include geography, demography, socio-economic background, gender and disability. Our new Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy will be at the forefront of all our work over the coming years, to bring about genuine change in these areas.

We will work in partnership and across government over the next three years to ensure that the arts are central to all aspects of policy formation and decision-making, and build on Project Ireland 2040, Creative Ireland and Global Ireland 2025. Our strategic partnership with local authorities will continue to be central to all our work.

It remains the case that being an artist is a difficult and precarious life. We are keenly aware that more needs to be done to support the living and working conditions of both performing and creative artists. Our commitment to improving artists' pay and conditions continues as a

priority in this plan. We will also work with artists and arts organisations to encourage innovation and excellence by, for example, providing opportunities to bring them together to advance their business and organisational skills. We will also help artists to respond to wider societal challenges, such as the climate emergency and the threats and opportunities of digital innovation.

To enable us, as the Arts Council, to put this plan into action, we will need to evolve as an organisation. We will improve our skills in research and data gathering, and work with the arts sector and others in the use and analysis of information. We will streamline and simplify our processes, improve our business systems, and ensure that our staff structure and capacity enable us to achieve our priorities.

We are confident that this plan will be truly transformative. However, only by working together with artists and our partners in government, the arts sector and the wider public will we achieve the ambitions we have set for ourselves, which ultimately will serve the people of Ireland.



Dóchas / Hope by Ceara Conway. Photograph by Tom Flanagan.

The Artist

Artists are supported to make excellent work that is enjoyed and valued



Tremble Tremble by Jesse Jones at Project Arts Centre. Photograph by Ros Kavanagh.

Key objectives

Ensure artists are supported at key stages of their careers.

Ensure a supportive working environment that addresses key points in the creative cycle.

Improve the living and working conditions of artists.

Supporting actions 2020–2022

Identify and prioritise specific forms of support needed by artists at particular stages, to help them to sustain productive and economically viable careers.

Ensure our investment and other actions take account of the needs of different disciplines and practices (including interdisciplinary work) and of the range of settings in which artists and the public engage.

Place emphasis on the fair and equitable remuneration of artists in our investment strategy, funding programmes and working relationships.

We will make information on the living and working conditions of artists an important feature of our advocacy programme as well as in our partnerships.

Identify and tackle injustice and discrimination experienced by artists, as set out in our Equality, Human Rights and Diversity (EHRD) Policy.

What we will have achieved

Our advocacy work will have ensured that artists and the role of the arts in Irish life are better understood and valued by policy-makers and the public.

We will have supported artists to develop new and enhanced skills to support careers in their chosen art form.

We will have supported artists to evolve their practice across and between disciplines.

Artists and their representative organisations will have reported positively on improved pay and conditions.

We will have enabled artists to pursue their practice in better working conditions.

Artists experiencing inequality or discrimination will have practical support to overcome it.



To deliver these supporting actions we will:

- Introduce a new advocacy and awareness programme that champions the unique role of the artist in a changing Irish society.
- Introduce a new professional development programme, in partnership with international, national and local agencies, to enable artists to advance their skills and develop their careers.
- Work with artists to support work that is collaborative, cross-disciplinary and open to evolving arts practice, both in nature and context.
- Support the living and working conditions of all types of artists, whether performing or creative, based on the Arts Council's policy on artists' pay and conditions.
- Work with local authorities and other partners to identify and provide the range of supports, including work spaces, that enable artists to sustain their careers.
- Create opportunities nationally and internationally for resource sharing, peer support and learning support among artists.
- Work with national and local agencies to ensure that the arts and artists are valued as part of social and economic development, and that artists benefit from opportunities to improve their business and enterprise skills.
- Implement and monitor the Equality, Human Rights and Diversity (EHRD) Policy to support artists from a diverse range of backgrounds and to enable arts organisations to work with them.

L: A *Simple Space* by Gravity and Other Myths, performed in Galway International Arts Festival. Photograph by Andrew Downey.

R: Traditional musician and producer, Jack Talty. Photograph by Maurice Gunning.

Public Engagement

More people enjoy high-quality arts experiences



Town Planners co-produced by Workhouse Union and Visual Carlow. Photograph by Brian Cregan.

Key objectives

Promote and develop good practice in audience development.

Increase engagement in the arts by particular communities.

Plan and provide for children and young people.

Supporting actions 2020–2022

Work with arts organisations to widen the range of people that become involved with the arts as audiences.

Use information provided by arts organisations as part of our promotional campaigns.

Establish a framework to support research, resource development and professional training in audience development.

We will work with key partners and relevant stakeholders to establish strategic actions that address the agenda in a sustainable fashion.

We will make community-engaged arts practice a key focus of our relationship with local government.

Work with arts organisations to identify groups at risk of discrimination or exclusion and to address this issue.

Make our EHRD Policy central to our decision-making.

Invest in artists, arts organisations and programmes dedicated to developing high-quality work with children and young people.

Support the provision of excellent arts experiences for young people.

What we will have achieved

Our advocacy and promotional campaigns will have raised the profile of the arts in Ireland.

Arts organisations will have increased and diversified their audiences.

We will have formed new partnerships with civil society bodies.

Different groups of people will have become engaged in the arts for the first time, through targeted programmes.

We will have acquired a deeper and more detailed understanding of the people we are reaching, within the context of the ten grounds of discrimination.

Children and young people will have had more opportunities to participate in, and enjoy, the arts.

To deliver these supporting actions we will:

- Develop a new sustainable sector-led approach to audience development and public engagement, in partnership with the arts sector.
- Bring arts professionals together to share data and information on trends and profiles of audiences across the arts, so that we better understand how people engage with, and participate in, the arts.
- Hold an Arts Assembly and regional gatherings that bring the public and elected representatives together to discuss the place of the arts in Irish life, leading to greater understanding of how the arts are relevant to people's lives and civic society.
- Use what we learn from the pilot Creative Places programme and other sources to expand our programme to support sustained long-term investment in targeted communities.
- Implement and monitor the EHRD Policy to ensure that the arts sector and the Arts Council support a greater diversity of audiences, participants and artists.
- Support arts organisations to use digital technology to enable more people to engage with the arts.
- Continue to deliver and mainstream the Creative Schools initiative over the next three years, in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills; the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.
- Create professional development opportunities for artists who are interested in developing their skills and sharing their expertise in working with children and young people, and in community-engaged practices.
- Support voluntary and non-professional participation in the arts through working with a range of agencies and organisations, including the Creative Ireland programme.



It Takes a Village, choreographed and directed by Catherine Young, performed in Siamsa Tíre, Tralee. Photograph by Mark O'Rourke.

Investment Strategy

Public monies are invested effectively to realise Arts Council priorities



Workshop during Achill International Harp Festival. Photograph by Marianne Mangan.

Key objectives

Make clear the principles and criteria that guide our investment strategy and inform our funding decisions.

Focus our investment on artistic activity.

Improve measurement of the outcomes of our investment.

Supporting actions 2020–2022

Review regularly all aspects of our investment strategy to ensure we are addressing the objectives of our overall strategy and our three-year plan.

Develop new equality and diversity criteria to incorporate into our investment strategy.

We will direct our investment at supporting high-quality art and public engagement with the arts.

We will use evidence to inform our advocacy, advice and communications.

What we will have achieved

We will have demonstrated greater transparency in how we invested public money, showing a clear connection between our policy priorities, our funding decisions, and the outcomes reported by artists and arts organisations.

Applicants will have found it easier to apply for funding and to report on their work.

We will have used information collected from artists and arts organisations to improve how we invest in art, showing we can respond flexibly to change.

Evidence and research on our investment in the arts will have driven debate and public discourse on the purpose, role and value of arts and culture in society.

By publishing the outcomes of our investment, we will have provided data that the arts sector can rely on when preparing sound, evidence-based plans and programmes. The outcomes will also have informed government and other partners in the development of their policies relating to the arts.



Height at Ormston House, Limerick. Photograph by Jed Niezgoda.

To deliver these supporting actions we will:

- Use our research expertise to identify, scope and commission research on specific impacts of our investments.
- Continuously review the funding framework to ensure we are achieving our priorities as a development agency in supporting work of excellence, ambition and risk, while also minimising bureaucracy.
- Work with government to ensure that an appropriate level of funding is made available to the arts in Ireland across a range of departments and directly to us at the Arts Council, to enable us to realise the ambitions of this three-year plan.
- Work with organisations across the arts sector to embed best-practice governance that is appropriate to the scale and capacity of organisations, so ensuring the future growth and sustainability of the sector.
- Explain clearly why we collect data and information and publicly share the outcomes of our investment through reports, case studies and seminars.
- Improve the ways we offer advice and feedback to funding applicants and potential applicants.
- Publish an annual summary of the work of artists and arts organisations.

Spatial and Demographic Planning

Well-planned arts provision benefits people across Ireland



Don't Push the River by Amanda Coogan. Photograph by Bríd O'Donovan.

Key objectives

Ensure our policies are informed by the national planning framework and by good spatial and demographic analysis.

Develop our strategic partnership with local government.

Ensure investment in arts infrastructure is strategic and sustainable.

Advise and advocate to ensure that national, regional and local capital provision are co-ordinated and sustainable.

Supporting actions 2020–2022

We will be well informed about the national planning framework and other national policies and, where appropriate, will contribute to their evolution.

We will combine our arts-specific data and information with spatial and demographic information from key public sources to provide a robust evidence base for our planning, partnerships and investments.

Use the *Framework for Collaboration* as the basis for our continuing relationship with local government.

We will advise that government capital funds should contribute to maintaining and operating the existing built infrastructure, to enable us to focus our current investment on arts activity.

We will seek to influence decision-making on capital development in the arts to ensure that it is well-planned from a spatial perspective, and that future annual operating costs are calculated and provided for.

What we will have achieved

The Arts Council will have become considered by partners and stakeholders as a key resource for spatial and demographic expertise in the arts.

Our advice, advocacy and investment decisions will have been informed by reliable evidence and a sound understanding of people and places.

Our relationship with local government will have been strengthened.

Arts centres across the country will have become more vibrant and sustainable.

Any new arts infrastructure will have been planned on an inter-agency basis to meet the proven spatial and demographic needs of local communities.

To deliver these supporting actions we will:

- Engage with government and other partners, including local authorities, to maximise opportunities for the arts in creative and community place-making as part of Project Ireland 2040 .
- Work with all government departments, including the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Rural and Community Development, and with local authorities, to ensure the arts are central to all aspects of policy formation and decision-making.
- Enhance our capacity and expertise to research, analyse and utilise spatial and demographic data.
- Ensure that the *Framework for Collaboration* action plan agreed by the Arts Council and the County and City Management Association (CCMA) is delivered.
- Focus our investment in local authorities, through the Invitation to Collaboration Scheme, on projects and initiatives that respond to changing local demographics.
- Commission a study on the level and impact of public investment in the arts at a local level, and continue to gather data on joint investment by the Arts Council and local authorities.
- Work with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, local authorities and the Creative Ireland programme to ensure that increased investment in culture through local authorities has maximum impact and carries major weight in planning.
- Implement our new Arts Centre Policy 2019 and work in partnership with the CCMA and individual local authorities to deliver relevant actions.
- Work constructively with government to ensure that future capital investment in arts infrastructure for existing and new projects under Project Ireland 2040 aligns with Arts Council policy.



Alonzo King LINES Ballet at the Dublin Dance Festival. Photograph by RJ Muna.

Developing Capacity

The Arts Council and the arts sector have the knowledge, skills and inventiveness to realise this strategy



Galway Fringe Festival. Photograph by Eamonn Brown.

Key objectives

Supporting actions 2020–2022

What we will have achieved

Ensure the Arts Council delivers this strategy expertly, effectively and efficiently.

Review continuously and change, as necessary, our governance structures, procedures and systems to ensure that they reflect our stated values at all times.

The Arts Council will have become better placed to respond quickly and strategically to external change and opportunities.

Develop our capacity in the fields of research, data and information, and communications. Greater capacity will help us in gathering evidence to inform our advice and advocacy, and allow us to improve our skills in presenting it.

Government policy on the arts will have been informed by our research and evidence, leading to better outcomes for artists and the public.

Ensure the Arts Council is active and inventive in the promotion of the arts.

We will dedicate resources, forge partnerships, and work with the arts sector to promote and champion the arts across many platforms.

Greater visibility for the arts and better understanding of their distinctive value and importance nationally.

Partnerships and alliances between the arts and wider society will have been reinforced.

Ensure the arts sector is skilled, resourceful and committed to its own renewal.

Work with others in and beyond the arts sector to create a framework for professional development.

Artists and arts professionals will have the artistic and organisational skills to create high-quality arts experiences for the public.

Ensure the Arts Council and the arts sector clearly understand their responsibilities in respect of our EHRD Policy.

Develop and deliver equality and diversity training and resources for the arts sector and for the staff and board of the Arts Council.

The arts sector will have an increased awareness and understanding of equality, human rights and diversity issues and of inter-culturalism as a way of working.



Composed of Nows by Aideen Barry. Photograph by Aideen Barry.

To deliver these supporting actions we will:

- Share our evidence and research-based insights on current trends and emerging issues in the arts with our partners in government, industry and the arts sector.
- Create a better understanding of future opportunities and potential synergies that can be created across government and with other agencies by advocating the benefits of the arts to partners in government and in wider society.
- Be ambitious and inventive in telling the story that the arts are for everyone, through a national advocacy campaign.
- Develop our internal capacity and competency in areas such as ICT, digital communications and diversity, and review our workforce planning and resourcing to deliver this three-year plan (in particular, establishing a new department to lead on advocacy).
- Review the governance structures of the Arts Council board to strengthen its ability to plan for the long term.
- Support training for arts professionals and arts organisations in areas such as governance, finance and organisational management and development.
- Continue to support arts organisations to broaden their income base through a continuation of our RAISE programme, and also help to develop a culture for giving to the arts in Ireland.
- Develop a climate change and environmental sustainability policy for the Arts Council, and support arts organisations in working towards a sustainable, environmentally friendly society.
- Renew policies and strategies in art forms and arts practices and set out how to deliver key projects and actions.



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