



ACNI 5 Year Strategic Framework 2019 2024

Consultation Response Community Arts Partnership



Strategic Framework Document Consultation Response

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland 5 year strategy.

Introduction to the Strategic Framework

In understanding the ACNI description of context, we as a sectoral convenor wish to offer some points and a range of comments and queries from page 11:

1. The arts, as a major employer support over 5,500 jobs, bringing benefit to more than just society, but to our economy as well.
2. There are more than artists and arts organisations that hold a significant stake in the success and efficacy of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland’s next strategy: communities of place and practice; all sections of our society but particularly those with less life chances; participants and indeed audiences; creative practitioners of the future and those already established; populations to nurtured, supported, assisted, educated and entertained
3. In thinking ‘creatively offering fresh solutions to not only add not only add strength and resilience but create opportunity and growth’, ACNI has offered much promise and ambition. This is an upward trajectory whereas all the context alluded to, points to reductions. We would be interested in what a creative solution might look like and will interrogate the Objectives and Priorities in so doing.
4. It must be stated that resilience comes from being exposed to challenges that are not overwhelming. And for a great many in this historically underfunded sector, incredible levels of resilience have continued to be displayed and exercised for decades, however, with another proposed series of cuts, or modelling cuts offering 7 or 8 different options as in AFP 10-20 applications, the challenges have never been greater and for many are in fact overwhelming.
5. Around this precise area, only one programme (resilience) is later offered in the ambitions and priorities that can only be accessed if turnover exceeds £400k – or a large swathe of AFP organisations, support like this is programmatically and disappointingly out of reach.

Correspondence from the Permanent Secretary of DfC in December 2017 sets out the Exchequer funding implications for the Arts Council, as shown in Table 2.

Scenario	2017-18 baseline (£m)	2018-19 (£m)	2019-20 (£m)	% Reduction 2018-19	% Reduction 2019-20
1	9.8	9.5	9.0	-4%	-8%
2	9.8	9.5	9.0	-4%	-8%
3	9.8	9.2	8.7	-7%	-12%

Table 2. ACNI Budget Scenarios

6. Where the Arts Council states that block grant funding has remained relatively level “rising inflation has created a reduction in real terms in public spending” no mention is made of the continuing drop in National Lottery revenues and the approach of other nations to offset that by increasing voted-for funds investment. This should be a key message from any lead advocate at present and we would welcome initiatives that mirrored those in Scotland and England and Wales in this regard.

7. It must be borne in mind that our nearest neighbour continues to see their increasing ambition matched with increasing financial support. .

Per Capita Spending outlook 2019-20

REP IRELAND	£15.69	(based on €7m uplift)
N IRELAND	£8.66	(based 10% cut)

82% more per person in Republic of Ireland

Brexit

8. The ArtsMatterNI offered a Brexit statement, given the incredible levels of uncertainty, still holds true for many in the sector.

The Arts Sector in N Ireland, like many other areas of public and civic life, harbours real fears for the prospect of exiting the EU without an adequate deal in place.

The Arts in Northern Ireland has always prided itself on being outward looking and offering progressive, dynamic and valuable opportunities to audiences, artists and participants, inviting performers and productions from around the world, particularly from our neighbours across Europe.

Our already critically-underfunded sector has had real concerns for some time of becoming even more isolated from creative investment opportunities like Creative Europe and Horizon 2020. Added to this, any further obstacles to the movement of artists and producers and indeed, their equipment, artworks and installations necessary for touring and creative collaboration, would have further negative financial and artistic impacts on our sector and our community,

While the ArtsMatterNI campaign group recognises that the wish of the local electorate was to “Remain” and with many campaign respondents still preferring that option, our campaign group is extremely concerned about the prospect of the UK exiting without a satisfactory deal in place.

We would encourage all those with influence to seek an agreement that affords us all some measure of assurance of a managed transition in the event of Brexit.

We would ask politicians to secure arrangements that provide protections to continued access to international touring, collaboration and investment that the arts here currently enjoy and protect our collective efforts to build peace and prosperity for our small population on the very edges of Europe.

Northern Ireland has experienced more than its share of political and economic turmoil, and the financial and social aftershocks are still felt across our society today. Short of the sureties provided by remaining within the EU, leaving without a deal presents profound concerns for a great many arts and cultural organisations in Northern Ireland. In those circumstances, any deal that recognises our particular status here and affords our sector commercial and creative advantages, would be welcomed.

The NI Assembly

9. While it is accurate to say that the Assembly doesn't sit and isn't functioning, is it accurate to say there are no mechanisms with which to alter spending priorities? The sector would like to understand what can be done, given limitations alluded to, in order that the commitment assuring “artists and arts organisations receive the support they need to continue to develop and work with confidence, vision and ambition” is met and perhaps recent budgetary legislation and decisions in Westminster and the new powers given to NI civil servants might offer alternative mechanisms to afford spending priorities and review.

Regarding “Introduction”

10. It is a concern that the Arts Council has offered a framework rather than a strategic plan. For many convened through focus groups and deliberation, the palpable fear is that organisations have not been offered adequate detail in which to see themselves reflected. Less detail may not be helpful to evaluating an organisations own position in making applications for support or understanding decision making thereafter.

Consultation

“You spoke, we listened”

11. The arts sector continues to welcome The Arts Council as an appropriate arm’s length body to advocate for the sector.
12. However it is worth noting the pronouncements of the chair of the Arts Council in recent times, and his less than fulsome recognition of the managerial acumen of the sector and highly qualified advocacy for greater resourcing of our under-resourced sector does not reflect the ambition or advocacy that sector requires.
13. The arts sector does need a champion, to support it where it stands right now.
14. The key points emerging from discussions among our sectoral conversations converged with some outlined, principally were:
 - The role of the arts
 - multi Annual Funding,
 - the need for more and better communication between the Arts Council, artists and arts organisations, to assist all aspects of relationship, funding bids and general arts development
 - audience development,
 - sustainability

The role of the arts

15. We concur wholly with the statement: “The role of the Arts in society cannot be viewed in isolation; they permeate all aspects of life, transforming people’s environment, their education and their place within society. The sector wants to make society and decision makers aware of the benefits the arts bring – intrinsically, socially and economically.
16. If we are to respond to the widest societal need, issues around access, not physical, but related to policy and practice, must be alluded to more strongly in the Strategic Framing of the next 5 years, given the reducing nature of financial support.
17. However, in contextualising and amplifying that statement, it is worth bearing in mind these pronouncements : “Indissociable from a democratic framework, cultural pluralism is conducive to cultural exchange and to the flourishing of creative capacities that sustain public life.” (UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions).
18. Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights tells us that “everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefit”.

Funding

19. The Arts Council currently suggests that 51% of all funding goes to areas experiencing deprivation according to its most recent AFS.

20. This would appear to be a significant reduction. The figure was 79% 5 years ago.
21. This would suggest that there have been massive cuts to creative opportunities in areas experiencing deprivation or those supporting that need and therefore there is a need to see greater investment to secure a rebalancing in light of new ACNI adoption of ideas around creative ecology.

Creative Ecology

What is the definition of a Creative Ecology?

22. Seen positively the creative ecology model moves away from industrial, discipline centred understandings of the work of artists and arts organisations and instead places focus on the system of relationships present within and across the widest community. Such ecological thinking is currently being applied in many sectors, from psychology to finance, as part of the search for more effective ways of analysing and responding to a context of rapid change and disruption.
23. As such, an ecological response cannot be Darwinian instead one of nurture and sensitive management, relating to the interconnectedness of our fragile eco-system in the arts. *Ecology particularly seeks to learn about symbiosis within natural systems, as a mutual exchange of benefits that draws nutrients and energy from the environment while at the same time helping to sustain it in the process.*¹
24. Creative ecology is an emerging concept in cultural policy that places the arts and creativity within a more including, holistic worldview and reveals interdependencies with economic, social, cultural and environmental systems.
25. *Our ability to fluidly adapt to these circumstances, to embrace regular disruptions and even see them as opportunities, is determined by our level of resilience. Resilience therefore describes our capacity to stick to our core purpose and avoid a more severe type of disruption - a collapse or 'system-flip' that could derail that core purpose entirely.*²
26. If all organisations are to be part of a creative ecology, the strategic framing of relationship between manifestly wealthier organisations and others needs to be re-calibrated to offer mutual benefit, and thus modified over time, to build the resilient, ecologically stable arts environment, and mitigate the risk of collapse.
27. Our deliberations would point to an inclusive scaling of support that can be assessed against not only organisational needs but the environmental context of an organisations' work and the locus of its practice in a wider system.
28. In such a model, the outworking would anticipate greater levels of support for organisations working in less favourable and perhaps fundable environments and areas of artistic practice and endeavour that have struggled for recognition; funding but have much higher levels of engagement, participation and indeed potentially audiences.
29. "We don't all work on a level playing field. Some organisations work in areas where there is very little capacity to contribute. This could lead to wealthier organisations being prioritised as being able to meet community needs because they have access to more funding rather than knowing what is going on, on the ground"³.
30. If we do understand the creative sector as a dynamic, responsive and diverse ecosystem, then we can factor in actual green environmental concern and praxis, to fully integrate higher order ecological sustainability into the creative ecosystem for even greater mutual benefit by embracing "green" approaches to:

¹ Ken Robinson, *Out of Our Minds: Learning to Be Creative*. West Sussex: Capstone Publishing, 2011,

² Zolli and Healy, "Bringing Resilience Home", p. 44

³ CAP focus group participant

- a. Skills: A creative workforce that is environmentally literate and making good green choices.
 - b. Operations: Institutions and businesses that have an organisational culture predicated on sustainability.
 - c. Creativity: Spaces and frameworks that enable a full range of creative expression to shape our human experience of climate change and the environment.
 - d. Strategy: Cultural policy, investment and planning that locks in climate change and environmental sustainability as a civic priority.
31. Whilst a laudable and highly beneficial ambition, creating a nurturing environment for the wider ecology of the arts in N Ireland at the same time offering skills development around entrepreneurialism and pathways to facilitate greater competition for increased philanthropic investment, against a back drop of cuts, has not served other eco-systems well.

Single Artform Priorities

32. The Arts Council draft strategy says that Single Artform Priorities no longer fit with our present situation. What does this mean? What is the new approach? How does it differ from the present approach? The sector would see this as a radical departure and would ask for greater understanding about this policy shift.
33. Over the past 20 years, ACNI clients have all been defined through Single Artform Policies with Priorities flowing from them. There have been 5 year plans for Community Arts, for Theatre, for Literature, for Digital Arts etc , some gaining ministerial approval, some not. Art forms were maintained in defined policy areas and each area were budgeted for with finite budget allocations. Only last year many in the sector we're informed of this. Is this no longer to be the case?
34. Why is it no longer appropriate to define the sector against single art form priorities; this is not explained in the Strategic Framework Document?
35. A more comprehensive understanding and ambition for this shift is required, with clearly detailed processes about the agglomeration of art forms into new priority areas, in order to understand the shift in this crucial area of resource management and guidance.
36. "We were definitely told that organisations were competing with other organisations in a similar art form. Does the rejection of single art form priorities mean that everyone is now competing for the declining funding with everyone else rather than organisations in any one art form?" ⁴
37. "Are we being forced into an ever larger competitive process?" ⁵

Working with Government

Programme for Government Outcomes

38. We need to understand how the new Strategic Framework docks with the PFG Outcomes. What are the outworking of the connections to these outcomes?
39. There does not seem to be a prioritisation of a range Section 75 populations.
40. Similarly the Department for Communities priorities are mentioned without further connection to the strategic framework.
41. If arts organisations are asked to connect their work to PFG outcomes, could the ensuing agreed Strategic Framework enable clients to do this?

⁴ CAP focus group participant

⁵ CAP focus group participant

Ambitions / Priorities for the next five years, structured under three headings:

42. It is rather confusing. Does the “us” refer to the Arts Council or does it refer to the community of practice or indeed the widest community of Northern Ireland? In the last heading ‘lead’, it seems to mean the Arts Council alone.

INSPIRE

Great art inspires us, nurtures our understanding of who we are and the world around us, and brings us together.

43. The term “great art” drew much conversation. It has connotations of spectacle and exclusivity of made work that does not connect with many practitioners’ understanding of process and practice. Much art that inspires and educates and brings people together is often purposely not great art, but something new, challenging, of the moment and experimental.
44. What makes art great however is its ability to inspire us, nurture our understanding ... The distinction is crucial.

CONNECT The Arts are without boundaries. They connect communities, help build creative places, define a new sense of identity, help us tell our stories, seek out and engage wider audiences. We want to reach out and reach further.

45. This ambition points to a strong social ambition for the Arts Council (or perhaps the sector, see 45) but there is no mention of intercultural, inter community, ethnic plurality, section 75 etc in the objectives and priorities that follow, although there are multiple mention regarding disability.
46. In defining a new sense of identity – most practitioners and client group work hard at celebrating identity and forging connections across cultures. Defining a new sense of identity may be problematic, in that it might be perceived to assert that the identities we have are not those that the Arts Council favours. Perhaps this is an identity of the artist in our midst. The meaning and inference is unclear and perhaps inchoate.

LEAD

We see our role as enabling and empowering the sector to achieve its ambitions, and to speak out for the arts; but we won’t be able to do that alone – we will need to work together with other stakeholders to deliver on this promise.

47. Focus group applauds this ambition however over half the objectives/priorities respond to resourcing issues and not necessarily leadership challenges and advocacy.
48. Perhaps greater contact and sharing of intelligences and platforms with the sector via groupings like ArtsMatterNi or Arts Collaboration Network could help advance ambitions to a range of policy makers, funders and stakeholders.

Points arising from the Principle/ Objectives/ Actions section (full breakdown

Revised Assessment Framework

- 49. What exactly is the revised assessment framework? This requires a definition in order to make an assessment of this approach.
- 50. How is incentivising risk taking and innovation defined?
- 51. How will this impact funding applications?
- 52. One of the major difficulties in making an informed assessment of the Strategic Framework is that if we do not know the definitions of the concepts being proposed it is very difficult to make a fair assessment of the proposals.

Points arising from Connect Objectives/Actions

Local Councils

- 53. Working with local councils needs more explanation?
- 54. Does the process about to be put in place offer more money to councils but lead to a reduction of funding for arts organisations?
- 55. What about Service Level Agreements? How will these be administered?

Disability Arts

- 56. There appears to be a massive prioritisation of disability support, with 8 mentions and priorities? Concern was expressed about other areas of critical need including mental health, for the community and practitioners for example, not gaining recognition.

Digital Media

- 57. It appears as if Digital Media has been prioritised. Again, there are other emerging, traditional and experimental and community practices that would require assistance in a truly creative ecology.

Geography

- 58. Will decisions on funding have a new geographically assessed component given the SLAs with councils etc?
- 59. Is there anything in the Framework which looks at novel funding processes in rural areas beyond these renewed relationships with councils?

Points arising from the Lead Objectives/Actions

Multi-Disciplinary Arts Assembly

- 60. What is a Multi-Disciplinary Arts Assembly?
- 61. What is the definition of a high level arts experience?
- 62. What advice will this body be tasked to offer?
- 63. Who will constitute the panel, artists/arts professionals? It is unclear.
- 64. How is participation defined versus audience development?

Building an arts infrastructure

- 65. This is set up around the Resilience and Blueprint programmes. These however are not opportunities available for everyone. They are invitation only and are selected with a substantial turnover as the starting point.

66. This is a very restricted model. How would this build the sector as a whole?

67. Would it be possible to suggest that the Arts Council explore finding new monies themselves to create a sustainability programme? They have done this in the past and it might be better to suggest that this is an approach the Arts Council could introduce.

Data Collection

68. The collection of data and data sharing – How can this be made more useful to small arts organisations and in the spirit of an ecology, offer benefit and support in turn?

Creative Industries Institute

69. What is the Creative Industries Institute?

70. Why is this programme in University of Ulster being prioritised for the sector? There is no mention in Appendices.

71. Marketing data - is this of any use to small arts organisations?

72. Should the Arts Council be prioritising International Artists?

73. How does the digital question connect with the approach of no longer prioritising individual art forms if there then appears to be a prioritisation of digital art forms?

Quotes

Multi Annual Funding and Public Funding

“This is so useful”

“Why does public funding need to be defined again. What is the starting point for the sector?”

“What if you are a new organisation - can you enter the funding period midway through?”

“There is also the question of accessing funds from other sources – Why are organisations punished for being able to secure funds elsewhere when they are being urged to do so?”

“There are areas in the document where it appears that the sector is being directed to prioritise locating funding other than from public sources.”

“This is posed as future proofing – finding more money from other sources – Aren’t we having to do that anyway?”

“While most organisations are already doing this there is a need to restate the importance of public funding and the role of public funding.”

“Why is there no mention of the levels of poverty – the impact of Austerity – the constant cuts to public services and wages – and then looking at the suggestion that there is money to be found elsewhere especially when all the information shows that this is becoming increasingly difficult. This approach needs to be questioned?”

Interculturalism

“There is no mention of Interculturalism or the intercultural Arts Strategy?”

“There is nothing in the document which refers to people from an ethnic minority background?”

Language and definitions

“Some of the language in the Strategic Framework is worrying”.

“The language contained within the document has very little definition which suggests that we cannot be completely clear which direction we are all about to move in.”

“The sector needs to raise questions regarding key issues within this Strategic Framework”.

COMMENTS/QUERIES IN BOXES

Principle	Objective	Actions	
<p>INSPIRE</p>	<p>1. Create the conditions in which work of excellence is made</p>	<p>a. Place quality and creative risk-taking at the centre of a revised assessment framework to ensure work of vision, power and imagination is made</p> <p>b. Incentivise innovation and experimentation through our grant-making processes</p> <p>c. Develop good-practice guidelines with the sector for self-assessment of creative work</p>	<p>Years 1 - 5</p> <p>Years 1 - 5</p>
<p>Excellence: Always a difficult judgmental and some contend arbitrary term.</p>			
<p>What is a revised assessment framework and what criteria does it respond to?</p>			
<p>Incentivise Does this mean new artistic or administrative practice will receive greater financial reward?</p>			
<p>Invest: Is this a continuation of only largest organisations, core funded groups could be given tools for resilience and blueprint? If so, needs to be extended to widest eco system</p>			
<p>Asset purchase Retaining and developing capital programme is welcomed. Larger scale Capital</p>			
		<p>2. Create a confident, vibrant arts infrastructure</p> <p>a. Invest in strategic programmes (Resilience and Blueprint) that build capacity in the sector</p> <p>b. Consider reinstatement of multi-annual funding</p> <p>c. Introduce a small-scale asset purchase maintenance scheme to ensure arts organisations have the right equipment to deliver their work</p> <p>d. Encourage more private giving by helping organisations build their fundraising capacity</p>	<p>Years 1 - 3</p> <p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 2</p>

invest in workforce development Succession planning and workforce programme very necessary too.

a. Commission a review of leadership needs and skills shortages and establish the extent of workforce diversity in the sector

Year 2

b. Support the arts sector to invest in workforce development and succession planning to meet future leadership needs

Years 3 - 5

Principle	Objective	Actions	
	4. Invest in accessible career pathways in the creative and cultural industries	a. Enhance the quality of creative careers advice in schools in partnership with NI Screen and the Department for the Economy b. Create a dedicated career pathway component within the Creative Schools Partnership programme	Years 1 - 5 Years 1 - 3
	5. Renew art form policies to reflect current needs	a. Review art form classifications to ensure their continued relevance in light of digital developments and implement a rolling policy review. b. Involve an independent multi-disciplinary arts panel in the review process (Consultative Assembly)	Year 2 Year 1
	Renew art form policies development Earlier Strat Framework outlined as “inappropriate” – why does digital change this?		
	independent multi-disciplinary arts panel in the review process (Consultative Assembly) – what is this? Is this a new model of Artistic Assessment?		
	areas of low engagement Is this based on geography, MDM or organizational engagement or participation rates of citizens? Will this be a new area of evaluation and research?		
	6. Create more opportunities for children and young people to explore and engage in creative practice	a. Invest in arts organisations which create high-quality learning experiences in and out of schools b. Invest in the Creative Schools Partnership (The Executive Office, Education Authority & ACNI) to improve creative and educational outcomes for children living in deprived areas	Years 1 - 3 Years 1 - 3

7. Inspire local communities to engage in transformative, high-quality arts experiences

a. Improve the regional and rural reach of funding through joint projects with local government, such as local place-based cultural initiatives.

Years 1 - 5

b. Strengthen arts activity in areas of low engagement

Years 1 - 5

joint projects with local government will this be open call, project basis, or via Core arts organisations?

Principle	Objective	Actions						
<p>CONNECT</p>	<p>1. Transform the relationship with local government through partnership working to strengthen local arts provision</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="970 264 1914 345">a. Formalise bilateral relations with individual councils through Service Level Agreements.</td> <td data-bbox="1964 264 2122 302">Years 2 - 3</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="970 391 1914 472">b. In conjunction with local government hold a biennial conference on the role of the arts in place making</td> <td data-bbox="1964 391 2059 428">Year 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="970 518 1914 599">c. Develop guidance on common data collection on the social impact of the arts</td> <td data-bbox="1964 518 2059 555">Year 2</td> </tr> </table>	a. Formalise bilateral relations with individual councils through Service Level Agreements .	Years 2 - 3	b. In conjunction with local government hold a biennial conference on the role of the arts in place making	Year 2	c. Develop guidance on common data collection on the social impact of the arts	Year 2
a. Formalise bilateral relations with individual councils through Service Level Agreements .	Years 2 - 3							
b. In conjunction with local government hold a biennial conference on the role of the arts in place making	Year 2							
c. Develop guidance on common data collection on the social impact of the arts	Year 2							
<p>Service Level Agreements will arts organisation be party to SLAs?</p>								
<p>Common data collection: could SLA's not mandate harmonization to assist research and reporting?</p>								

2. Improve access to / participation in the arts for people with a disability

Improve access to / participation: we understand need for this – but could concept of access not be widened to include all communities that excluded

Creative Industries will ACNI arts and cultural organisation access this? If so, how, is there a Creative Industries Strategy to refer to?

3. Accelerate growth opportunities in the Creative Industries through R&D partnerships with FE/HE and industry partners

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| a. Renew the Disability Action Plan | Year 1 |
| b. Carry out a Disability Audit of funded arts venues | Years 1 - 2 |
| c. Rebrand and launch Equality Access Charter with improved processes and usability; advocate its use within the sector | Year 2 |
| d. Introduce the Hint Card for people with disabilities to Northern Ireland | Year 3 |
| e. Scope a Northern Ireland-wide Buddy Scheme for people with disabilities amongst core funded organisations | |
| | |
| a. Establish a working partnership with the Creative Industries Institute to create research and career opportunities for artists | Years 1 - 5 |

Principle	Objective	Actions
	4. Work with sector partners to improve market intelligence and increase audiences for the arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Evaluate current audience development practice Year 3 b. Build marketing capacity for arts organisations through programmes such as Pathway to Blueprint Years 1 - 5 c. Create dedicated digital training for arts organisations to exploit market opportunities Years 1 - 3
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>audience development should this not be evaluated in first instance to identify need?</p> </div>	
	5. Capitalise on increased tourism through creating compelling visitor experiences and generate increased revenues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Work with Belfast City Council on the development of a major city centre cultural and visitor attraction Years 1 - 5 b. Increase strategic engagement with Tourism NI to increase market visibility and brand awareness of arts and culture Years 1 - 5
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>city centre cultural and visitor attraction Will this form part of SLA and support ACNI client orgs? What role will sector have?</p> </div>	
	6. Connect to the world by supporting artists and arts organisations to present their work internationally, and thereby strengthen our cultural profile and global reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sustain international residencies and showcasing opportunities to enhance the global reputation of artists from Northern Ireland Years 1 - 5 b. Support international touring through funding programmes Years 1 - 5
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>International: Many would contend that post Brexit, more local and all island interventions may be necessary.</p> </div>	
	7. Encourage innovative practice that cross artform boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create a seed fund to support new ideas that use digital technology in the arts Year 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>digital technology in the arts Is there a digital arts strategy that organisations can access and refer to their development needs? If not, should this be priority to ID need?</p> </div>

Principle	Objective	Actions	
<p>Creative Industries Institute in UU. Does this partnership relate to a digital arts strategy already in place?</p>		<p>b. Broker a partnership that connects the Creative Industries Institute and industry leaders to build digital capability within the sector</p>	<p>Years 3 - 5</p>
<p>Resource Organisations: most have their own networks. Does this priority aim to broaden their capacity and linkages?</p>	<p>8. Promote knowledge exchange through funding better networks for the arts</p>	<p>a. Invest in resource organisations to support practitioners through the creation of networks and the provision of training and professional development</p>	<p>Years 1 - 5</p>

Principle	Objective	Actions
<p>LEAD</p> <p>Partnership with the Policy Evidence Centre at the Ulster University:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) will this be undertaken with all client orgs? b) Is this to interrogate current art form policies? c) Is this only regarding social impact? 	<p>1. Demonstrate the important role of the arts to society through research and evaluation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish a research partnership with the Policy Evidence Centre at the Ulster University to promote critical thinking and analysis to inform policy development Years 1 - 5 b. Commission evaluations of strategic programmes Years 1 - 5 <p>strategic programmes: what are "strategic programmes? Will AFP have new evaluations processes?</p>
<p>Grow public investment in the arts – resounding cheer from all !</p> <p>better resourced arts sector by engaging Suggestion to use ArtsMatterNI and others to assist?</p>	<p>2. Make the case for a better resourced arts sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Grow public investment in the arts Years 1 - 5 b. Build public and political support for a better resourced arts sector by engaging with decision makers Years 1 - 5 c. Commission an attitudinal survey of stakeholders (MLAs, local government, departments and agencies) to assess perceptions of the value of the arts Year 2
<p>activities in core funded venues Concern that this boosts only these venues? Can arts week not be more like a platform-based promotion like Culture Night or Biennale?</p>	<p>3. Ignite the imagination of the public by articulating how the arts improve our lives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Capture the value of the arts through communication campaigns, case studies and video interviews Years 1 - 5 b. Establish a Northern Ireland Arts Week with activities in core funded venues as part of an annual celebration of creativity Year 2 c. Commission a biennial survey on changing public perceptions of the arts

4. Future-proof the investment in the sector by helping organisations grow by generating income from more diverse sources

a. Prepare funded organisations for future challenges through the Resilience and Pathways to Blueprint programmes

Years 1 - 5

Future-proof the investment Concern that this only relates to relatively large organisations not ecology of sector. Can this not be offered across eco-system under threat?

Principle	Objective	Actions
<p>tailored fundraising measures Sector unsure the meaning of this priority?</p>	<p>5. Provide sectoral leadership by producing new thinking on challenges that the sector faces</p>	<p>b. Support the development of tailored fundraising measures for the sector Years 1 - 5</p> <p>a. Identify emerging opportunities through horizon scanning; hold advice clinics and other dissemination events Years 1 - 5</p>
<p>Consultative Assembly What is this? It appears to be working in Year 1 in terms of artistic assessment?</p>	<p>6. Establish a Consultative Assembly of arts professionals to provide independent advice on sectoral issues</p>	<p>a. Establish a multi-disciplinary arts assembly to involve artists in policy issues (assessment of quality, review of grant processes) and provide a touchstone for sectoral opinion Year 2</p>
	<p>7. Create shared opportunities for the arts through engagement with stakeholders to achieve broader outcomes</p>	<p>a. Establish data sharing agreements with local government and the Policy Evidence Centre Years 2 - 5</p> <p>b. Build ongoing relations with a range of public and philanthropic funders to achieve broader social outcomes Years 1 - 5</p>
	<p>8. Improve the living & working conditions of artists</p>	<p>a. Re-test the findings of the Living & Working Conditions of Artists survey Year 3</p> <p>b. Develop a new scheme aimed at emerging artists Years 1 - 5</p>
	<p>9. Be advocates for change, supporting sector organisations to empower deaf/disabled artists</p>	<p>a. Increase programming and touring opportunities for disability-led performances Years 1 - 5</p>

Final thoughts

The arts is a major employer in Northern Ireland supporting nearly 6000 jobs and bringing benefit to more than just our artistic community and immediate society but our economy as well. As such, it needs to be recognised for the astonishing level of productivity, support, creativity and community value that it generates from the smallest single line subvention in the £10.3BN annual block grant to NI. The sector needs to be supported adequately and appropriately. In offering its new strategic framework, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland is proposing solutions to not only add strength and resilience but create opportunity and growth. This promises much but in the current circumstances, with the greatest of respect, running with the hares and hunting with the hounds may prove highly problematic; managing reducing subvention, without political support and calling for increased entrepreneurialism and competition for even more limited private and social finance does not create the conditions for sustainability. Far from it. The only surplus we anticipate, are further questions.

But, short of pushing back with radical measures such as asking for Special National Lottery Status for N Ireland, approaching the Treasury and DCMs to recognise that the immediate term post Brexit will have unknown and unquantifiable pressures on resources and that the social fabric of N Ireland may require ever more shoring up, developing a state-guaranteed scheme to underwrite expenditure, will the Arts Council gain the means to sustain the sector?

In these next years, the arts will become more necessary and their ability to culturally include, all the more invaluable than at any point in the last 25 years. But the greatest difficulty, as always, is the limited quantum of financial support that our erstwhile Northern Ireland Assembly Executive deemed sufficient for their arts sector's needs.

Today with no such executive and the smallest budget line in one of the larger departments of government, it is unknown as to the level of support that the arts community can anticipate receiving from non-mandated civil servants. Navigating the differential between ambition and resource, need and necessity, then and now, will be a difficult proposition for all of us in the sector.

Managing reductions, urging the pursuit of private or philanthropic funding and the further efficiencies within and across organisations is an understandable response from ACNI. But in order to mitigate all the difficulties that this three pronged approach embraces, this sector will require more support than is evidenced in the Strategic Framework for the next five years. This is an emergency for the arts in Northern Ireland; an emergency that we have all anticipated coming that requires the most determined and canny responses. Much has been made of how resilient the sector must become but we would insist that the sector has already proven itself incredibly resilient. It must be restated that resilience comes from being exposed to challenges that are not overwhelming however, for a great many in this historically underfunded sector, the additional burdens and codified reductions may mean that the next challenges do indeed overwhelm.

In the proposed interdependent setting of a creative ecology, all components feed from and into the ecosystem, creating life and regeneration. But without the environmental conditions to support that cycle, the arc of that possibility can only narrow. Balancing the equilibrium by assisting the most in need, not the most able, would seem an appropriate intervention.

Many thanks to all who attended focus groups and discussions.

Conor Shields

CEO CAP , Convenor ArtsMatterNI



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