



Annual Business Plan 2023–24

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Cover image

Alison McCrudden, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, with Belfast actor James Martin, star of Best Short Film Oscar winner, 'An Irish Goodbye'.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is committed to making information available in large print, Braille, audio, and Easy Read and will endeavour to provide information in languages other than English as well as British and Irish sign language on request.

Our mission is to place the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life.

Who we are

We are the official funding and development organisation for the arts in Northern Ireland. Our principal sponsor is the Department for Communities. We also distribute funding from the National Lottery.

Working together with the Department for Communities, we support and promote the important contribution that the arts make to Northern Ireland.

We want great art to **inspire** us, **connect** communities and **lead** and empower the sector to achieve its ambitions.

What we do

We support and develop high quality arts activity. We invest public funding, using these funds to create opportunities for more people, from all backgrounds and communities, to enjoy and take part in the arts.

We distribute Lottery funds. Through applications to our Lottery funding programmes we're able to fund projects that develop new arts activity, supporting individuals, communities and organisations.

We develop and improve the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the Arts by producing strategic research and intelligence and working with partners in the cultural sector to advise the Department for Communities, Local Authorities and other bodies on matters relating to the arts. We also have strong international links in the UK and beyond.

We increase public access to and participation in the Arts to create an innovative, creative and diverse society where people can fulfil their potential and contribute fully to society.

We raise the profile of the arts in Northern Ireland. We're the national voice for the arts in Northern Ireland, promoting the quality, value and importance of the region's artists/ arts organisations and the impact they make.

We influence decision-makers. The arts take place in many different settings. They can have a dramatic impact on the quality of people's lives, and the places in which they live and work. The arts are also frequently at the heart of initiatives for economic and social regeneration. Our job is to ensure that the contribution that the arts can make is recognised.

We develop international opportunities in the arts. We have developed partnerships with cultural organisations such as the British Council, and work collaboratively with all the UK nations to promote Northern Ireland art internationally and we encourage international exchange and collaboration between artists and arts organisations.

We work collaboratively with stakeholders and the public. Seeking and listening to feedback through our formal consultations and open conversations, we ensure that our programmes of work deliver public benefit.

We foster innovation between the arts and the wider creative industries. By facilitating skills development and knowledge transfer in digital technology for the arts sector, we encourage collaboration, leverage of additional funding and expertise through key partners and encourage, and the creation of digital artwork to ensure the arts evolve with audiences.

Our Vision

Our guiding principles can be summarised in three themes. Our strategic framework¹ provides an overview of the strategic direction we are proposing from 2019–24

Inspire

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

Connect

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

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 to deliver on this promise.



Michael Longley, Frank Ormsby and Arts Council Chair Liam Hannaway celebrate launch of new edition of John Hewitt's 'Selected Poems'.

Five Year Strategic Framework — Summary Objectives

Inspire

- Excellence
- Vibrant infrastructure
- Invest in workforce development and skills
- Invest in career pathways
- More opportunities for young people
- Inspire local communities

Connect

- Transform relationship with local government
- Improve access/participation for disabled people
- Growth opportunities in creative industries
- Increase audiences for arts
- Capitalise on increased tourism
- International connections
- Cross artform boundaries
- Knowledge exchange/networks

Lead

- Demonstrate role of arts through research
- Make the case for better resources
- Articulate how the arts improves lives
- Future proof investment in sector by helping organisations diversify income streams
- Establish a deliberative forum
- Improve living and working conditions of artists
- Engage stakeholders for broader outcomes
- Emergency COVID response

¹ ACNI-5-year-Strategic-Framework-for-Developing-the-Arts-2019-2024 (artscouncil-ni.org)

Introduction

Financial Context

This business plan was drafted and approved prior to receiving an indicative budget allocation for FY23–24. In the absence of an Executive and a set budget by the NI Secretary of State, our indicative resource allocation was proposed at a 10% reduction from 22–23 (£9,173,000) and subsequently confirmed as a 5% reduction. This poses significant challenges for us in delivering all the actions set out in the 23–24 business plan as we cannot commit to new programmes or projects.

However, the actions described throughout the plan remain as an ambition with a caveat on 5 out of 28 that are resource contingent. The other actions may still be achievable, albeit at a lesser scale than originally anticipated.

NI Executive

This business plan reflects the fifth and final year of the five-year strategic framework for the Arts in NI 2019–24 entitled *'Inspire, Connect, Lead'* specifically developed as a framework in light of prevailing uncertainties.

Reflecting on the last four years, those uncertainties have been constant and extensive. The Arts Council's strategy was developed in April 2019 and from then, there has been a functioning Executive for only two years, from January 2020–February 2022. Nonetheless we have worked extensively to ensure the importance of the arts and creative sector is recognised and acknowledged across government by ensuring the sector was supported through the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainties

following that, including the cost of living crisis. We thank Minister Hargey for her support for the arts sector during her time in office.

The Arts Council also formally responded to the updated draft Programme for Government (PfG)² to ensure the role of arts and culture is visible within the framework as playing a crucial role in supporting the Executive to meet its strategic objectives.

The Arts Council has and will continue to engage with key decision makers and demonstrate the value our artists, creative practitioners and arts organisations have in relation to our economy, health and wellbeing, society and education.

We will continue to gather and present evidence to the Communities Committee (when sitting) and the All-Party Group on Arts and other committees of strategic interest to the arts. We will encourage political parties to commit to supporting the arts, recognise the important contribution of the arts to society and the need for appropriate investment.

Despite challenging times, the cultural sector continues to have ambition. It is encouraging that Belfast has been awarded the City of Music status by UNESCO recognising the importance of music to all citizens and emphasising the importance of placing creativity and cultural industries at the core of urban development plans. We also celebrated the opening of the derelict Bangor Court House

transformed into a thriving arts venue through the first Community Asset transfer for arts and culture in Northern Ireland.

We will continue to support portfolio funded organisations and will build awareness of funding opportunities available through other public funders, charitable trusts and foundations. We will continue to invest in capacity-building measures to help the sector adapt to a new operating environment in the financial year ahead.

The Arts Council will support the work of the Department for Communities and the sector on DfC's Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy Taskforce as they develop their long-term vision for arts, culture and heritage.

Arts Council 2024–29 strategy

The Arts Council will develop its 2024–29 strategic framework with the creative sector throughout 2023–24. We reviewed our progress against the 2019–24 strategic framework and as of Q2 year four — 66% of actions were completed. We will use the insights and learnings from our previous strategic development process to inform the new strategy.

This will be designed as a 'framework' to build in flexibility to reflect the uncertainty and political context at the time of development. We will ensure the themes align to DfC's long term vision for arts, culture and heritage. We will measure our strategic progress by outcomes and ensure our grant programmes and internal data sets capture key outcomes.



Storyteller Masakmo Carey is a recipient of the Arts Council's Minority Ethnic Artists Mentoring and Residency Programme.

The Arts Council will engage with key decision makers and demonstrate the value our artists, creative practitioners and arts organisations have in relation to our economy, health and wellbeing, society and education.

Withdrawal from the EU implications

International exchange and collaboration is an important area for many of the organisations and artists we support. There remains a number of issues relating to the UK's withdrawal from the EU as well as implications from the Northern Ireland Protocol impacting the movement of creative goods and artists as well as opportunities for organisations to maintain and develop international partnerships.

Additional costs and increased administrative processes have reduced the opportunity for local artists to showcase their work outside of Northern Ireland and visa restrictions threaten to reduce the visibility of international artists to local audiences.

As a partner on the Four Nations group of Arts Councils, we continue to create opportunities for

international collaboration through innovative programming and support international creatives to visit Northern Ireland by providing dedicated advice and support via the Arts Infopoint UK. We will also explore bilateral opportunities with the Nordic and Baltic regions along with our UK and Irish colleagues, thus building further on our important East/West relationship as we continue to work in collaboration to provide international platforms and opportunities for our artists and arts organisations post Brexit as well as on initiatives to support people with disabilities.

We continue to gather evidence on the impact of leaving the EU and articulate concerns to the UK government and EU Parliament.

The strong historical relationship that we have with colleagues in An Chomhairle Ealaíon continues to be

significant and we are actively planning joint initiatives for 2023–24 such as an all-island touring programme and opportunities presented by the Taoiseach's Shared Island initiative, which builds on the framework of support we already offer to our jointly funded clients.

² <https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/arts-council-response-to-the-ni-executive-consultation-on-the-programme-for>

Environmental impact

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is fully committed to being part of the journey to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. We will, through our policies and strategy work promote the highest standards in environmental responsibility. We will continue to audit our own organisation and core arts sector and establish how to best promote, support and sustain positive environmental practices, for the good of all.

The cultural and creative sectors have an important role to play in helping Northern Ireland prepare for the climate-changed future by challenging, informing and engaging audiences in conversations about the environment.

Our work in this area will be greatly enhanced by the implementation of the Northern Ireland Assembly climate change legislation and targets for emissions cuts. This provides a clearly defined policy framework in which the Arts Council can operate to mitigate and adapt to climate change through its grant programmes. We will also support the actions relevant to us within the DfC climate action plan.³

Travel and touring (both to and from Northern Ireland) is essential to the arts here, but as climate legislation becomes law in NI, and the impact of climate changes becomes more evident, so does our need to respond to the challenge. This requires finding a way to sustain a means of producing and sharing art, which supports our transition to a global low carbon future.

To begin this process we have completed a baseline survey of local arts organisations to gauge levels of awareness, identify existing action and determine how best the Arts Council can support organisations moving forward.

Professional conduct and diversity

As the Arts Council continues to support freelance artists and arts organisations adapt to changes in working practices and employment regimes, it will continue to uphold and promote all relevant legislation and best-practice as it relates to professional conduct, diversity and equality in the workplace.

We want the increasing diversity of Northern Ireland society to be reflected in the audiences, leaders, producers and creators of a progressive and dynamic arts sector. We will measure our progress by collecting, analysing and reporting on data relating to the equality and the diversity of the work and organisations we fund. Changes to the Annual Funding Survey's gender identity and sexual orientation classifications demonstrate our ambitions here.

The Arts Council is committed to fair pay for artists and want to ensure that artists and professionals working in the creative community are paid fairly and appropriately for their time. We wish to ensure all organisations and projects which receive public funding are demonstrating best practice with regard to fair pay and that they understand the impact on the wider sector of not doing so.⁴

Right

Artist and facilitator Leona Devine with a group from the rural village of Lettershandoney, participating in an Arts & Older People Project.



³ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/dfc-climate-change-action-plan-22-23.pdf>
⁴ ACNI-Rates-of-Pay-for-Artists-March-2022.pdf (artscouncil-ni.org)



Teiya Kasahara 笠原真野 in *The Queen In Me*, 2022, co-presented by the Canadian Opera Company, Amplified Opera, Nightwood Theatre, and Theatre Gargantua. Part of Belfast International Arts Festival's 2022 focus on artists from Canada. Photo: Gaetz Photography

Recovering from COVID-19

A sector recovering from the pandemic

The Business Plan for 2023–24 reflects the context of a society that has still not fully recovered from the impacts of the COVID pandemic and associated lockdowns. The fragile and vital arts sector in NI has been exponentially affected. The Arts Council will continue to work closely with the sector in 2023–24 as we develop our 2024–29 strategy to ensure we reflect ongoing challenges and identify possible solutions as part of the strategic development process.

The annual funding survey remains a vital way for the Arts Council to monitor the activities of its core funded clients. Findings from our latest 2021–22 Annual Funding Survey⁵, released in September 2022, further acknowledged the ongoing impacts that COVID-19 has had on the sector.

These revealed how workforce levels remain suppressed (a decline of 33%) and earned income has declined by £6million compared to pre-pandemic levels, despite core costs increasing by over £5.5million. Audience levels were only 45% of what they were pre-pandemic and the sector continues to operate within a challenging operating environment.

Data from the survey continues to support advocating for the sector on a range of important issues like the energy crisis and inform policy development work. Moving forward, we plan to strengthen our dialogue with the sector to ensure the surveying process itself is as efficient as possible.

Cost of living crisis

A recent assessment by the Arts Council of the impact of rising energy and living costs concludes that the arts sector in Northern Ireland faces additional costs of more than £12 million by the end of the 2022–23 financial year.

In addition to rising energy bills, arts organisations will have to cope with increased costs from suppliers and artists as they attempt to offset their own costs, and many smaller organisations will be vulnerable to rent increases. Factoring in other inflationary increases, including rent, salaries, programming costs, materials and insurance, the Arts Council's estimate of the additional costs to the arts sector of £12 million could be conservative.

We will continue to work with the Department to make the case to the Executive and the Northern Ireland Office as the impact continues to take its toll on the venues, theatres, arts organisations and creative practitioners who make up our vibrant arts sector.

We remain committed to place the work of our artists and arts organisations at the heart of our social, economic and creative life, advocating their worth in a way that connects with audiences, policymakers, investors and wider society, contributing to the growth of our wider economy and building cohesion within and between communities.



Students from Mercy College Belfast taking part in an art project supported by the Creative Schools Partnership.

Public sector funding challenges

Government investment in the arts in Northern Ireland has fallen from £14.1 million in 2011–12 to £10.2 million in 2021–22. When inflation is taken into account, this represents a 40% cut in funding for arts organisations.

Prior to the additional cost of living estimations, The Arts Council estimated in May 2022 that it required an additional £16.6million exchequer funding on top of its £10.197m baseline at least to best meet its statutory duties⁶ particularly in relation to increasing public access to and participation in the arts.

We will continue to explore partnership opportunities within DfC, other public bodies and philanthropic organisations to boost our budget in these challenging circumstances.

⁵ <https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/annual-funding-survey-2021-2022-headline-report>

⁶ The Arts Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (legislation.gov.uk)



Big Telly Theatre Co. Rhodri Lewis in 'Frankenstein's Monster is Drunk' returns to Lyric Theatre in February 2023 following sell-out run off Broadway. Photo: Neil Harrison Photography

2023–24 Business Plan Actions

A Snapshot

Inspire

Programmes to support reach, artistic quality and innovation

- Proposal for revised approach to AFP programme delivery and key indicators to measure outcomes
- Invest in Creative Schools Partnership (with EA, TEO) to improve confidence, wellbeing and resilience of children and enhance community relationships
- Invest in arts organisations which create high-quality learning experiences in and out of schools through YPWB programme and AFP
- Open Y2 of Rural Engagement Arts Programme (REAP)
- Develop and implement a Creative Industries plan to incentivise innovation and experimentation

Developing the creative workforce

- Complete skills pipeline research in partnership with CC skills to establish skills shortages
- Explore improvements to AFS S75 data capture to establish workforce diversity
- Develop and implement a programme specifically to support organisations succession planning and workforce development including upskilling*
- Invest in resilience and capacity building programmes
- Review evidence, demand and need in relation to studio spaces in Belfast in partnership with DfC and BCC*
- Continue to support Capital bids should budget be available

Connect

Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

- Complete final progress report of Disability action plan and submit to Equality Commission
- Continue involvement in UK wide disability access card implementation group and trial in NI*

Connecting to strategic partners

- Continue to work with local authorities on data capture to build a strategic picture of the creative sector in NI
- Develop and open a North/South touring programme*
- Continue strategic engagement with Tourism NI to unlock opportunities for arts in NI

National and International representation

- Commission a bespoke digital training programme to support sector development*
- Invest in resource organisations to support practitioners through the creation of networks and the provision of training and professional development
- Sustain international residencies and showcasing opportunities to enhance the global reputation of artists from NI

Lead

Engaging with the sector

- Continue to advocate and develop bids to DfC to evidence additional budget requirements to support organisations post-COVID and through the cost of living crisis
- Continue to support two, independently facilitated deliberative forums a) minority ethnic b) rural
- Develop 2024–29 strategic framework

Valuing the creative sector

- Build ongoing relations with a range of public and philanthropic funders to achieve broader social outcomes
- Build public and political support for a better resourced arts sector by engaging with decision makers
- Capture the value of the arts through communication campaigns, case studies and video interviews
- Commission evaluations of strategic programmes
- Continue to make the case for a better resourced arts sector
- Develop and implement a strategic development programme for FY23–24
- Ring-fence budget to support emerging artists, either through SIAP or a separate programme
- Continue to develop and open relevant grant funding programmes for artists and organisations

* Actions dependent on further resources

Inspire

Programmes to support reach, artistic quality and innovation

The Arts Council's Annual Funding Programme (AFP) is the most significant allocation of public funding for the arts in Northern Ireland each year. The aim of the Annual Funding Programme (AFP) is to support Northern Ireland's arts infrastructure through grants to organisations in all artforms and practices for their core and programming costs. AFP organisations will be key to helping us achieve the objectives set out in our 5-year strategic framework for developing the arts, *Inspire, Connect, Lead*⁷, and we expect all awardees to support us in delivering these objectives.

In 2022–23, The Arts Council supported 95 organisations by awarding £13,012,490 through Exchequer (£8,531,011) and National Lottery funds (£4,481,479). It remains a financially challenging time for everyone working in the arts, and though we were able to award largely stand-still public funding for 2022–23, we are facing a weakened creative sector, working with reduced income and facing higher costs of delivery.

Organisations in receipt of funding from the Annual Funding Programme (AFP) from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, are required to complete an annual survey on the activity they deliver, their workforce composition and income and expenditure for the relevant year.⁸ We will review our assessment criteria in relation to the Annual Funding

Programme with particular reference to artistic quality and innovation. We will review how we collect data from AFP organisations to create a more streamlined approach where applicable.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland, with support from Urban Villages Initiative and Education Authority, launched the Creative Schools Partnership Programme in spring 2018. The aim of the programme was to bring more creativity into the classroom to improve educational outcomes for students. The partnership meets a collective ambition to improve community cohesion, support government priorities and reduce educational inequalities. We will continue to commission this programme and monitor the impacts for participants.

The Arts Council will also evaluate the 2022–23 Young People and Wellbeing programme to inform the 2023–24 programme. This work enables artists and professional arts organisations working in partnership with youth and community organisations to give a voice to young people at risk. This allows the future generation to begin a life-long interest in the arts and creativity while finding positive channels for self-expression, an improved attitude towards mental health and an expanded awareness of the support that is available.

The Arts Council is also aware of the challenges facing rural communities and the need for further development of the arts in these areas. Objective 7 of our *Inspire* Principle states: Inspire local communities to engage in transformative, high-quality arts experiences. Associated actions are to: improve the regional and rural reach of funding through joint projects with local government, such as local place-based cultural initiatives; and strengthen arts activity in areas of low engagement. We will evaluate year 1 of the Rural Engagement Arts Programme (REAP) and use the insights to inform the second year of the programme.

The creative industries are a sector within the economy by which wealth is generated through knowledge, information and intellectual property. The Arts Council operates at the intersection between our funded arts sector and the commercial creative industries sector; aiming to transfer the knowledge between our artists, our organisations and successful creative businesses.

In Northern Ireland the Creative Industries are one of the fastest growing sectors. In 2019 they were worth over £1.3bn to the NI economy, employed 33,000 people, and provided a valuable contribution towards the economy; including their contribution towards tourism.⁹ The creative industries are large, relative

to the arts sector, and the Arts Council is committed to partnership working to contribute towards its development.

We opened a number of Creative Industries programmes in 2022–23 with a focus on digital and immersive technologies and encouraging cross sectoral collaboration. The evaluation of these programmes will inform the priorities for the 2023–24 Creative Industries plan.

The Arts Council will continue to develop and implement a Creative Industries Programme in partnership with NI Screen, Future Screens NI, Creative & Cultural Skills and Digital Catapult.

Our top actions

- 1 Proposal for revised approach to AFP programme delivery and key indicators to measure outcomes.
- 2 Invest in arts organisations which create high-quality learning experiences in and out of schools through YPWB programme and AFP.
- 3 Invest in Creative Schools Partnership (with EA, TEO) to improve confidence, wellbeing and resilience of children and enhance community relationships.
- 4 Open Y2 of Rural Engagement Arts Programme (REAP).
- 5 Develop and implement a Creative Industries plan to incentivise innovation and experimentation.

⁷ *Inspire, Connect, Lead*, <https://artscouncil-ni.s3-assets.com/ACNI-5-year-Strategic-Framework-for-Developing-the-Arts-2019-2024.pdf>

⁸ <https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/annual-funding-survey-2021-2022-headline-report>

⁹ <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/dfc-creative-industries-economic-estimates-2022.pdf>

Developing the creative workforce

Our artists are one of the greatest sources of talent that we have in our society — supporting their continued creative development and nurturing new talent for the future is an essential role of the Arts Council. We will continue to value, celebrate and support artists through our routine system of awards and commissions and by developing further opportunities to highlight their work at home and abroad where possible. Maintaining our relationships with relevant partners we will ensure that there are proper career pathways and progression in our sector.

The Arts Council has created opportunities for artists to develop their artistic skills and a key development area is within digital. We have supported digital upskilling through our grants for artists but also have dedicated programmes within the digital realm through digital evolution grant programmes; ensuring that artists' practice evolves with technological changes. As so many people engage with the arts digitally, it is important that we invest in artists' skills to meet the future needs of the arts audiences.

We will undertake a study to understand the creative industries skills needs and talent pipeline and determine where relevant skills are gained from. The information from the study will be used to inform future policy and interventions. It will determine if organisations have the right skills in their workforce, and will assess opportunities provided by organisations to develop skills. It will help us to better understand career pathways into the NI creative industries.

We are also keen to explore improvements to our existing data capture in relation to equality and diversity and will work to enhance our annual funding survey data capture to ensure workforce diversity forms part of the study.

The insights from both outputs will inform the development of a specific grant programme to support organisations' succession planning and workforce development requirements.

At the beginning of 2022, Arts and Business NI launched a pioneering five year financial growth programme to support small and medium arts organisations to develop their workforce's strategic and financial planning capabilities. We will support Arts and Business NI over the course of this programme.

The Arts Council will also continue to work with Derry City and Strabane District Council following their resilience programme for arts organisations in the North West and enhance the reporting and data capture to further understand the scope and scale of the sector and support advocacy.

We will work with other public funders in the Arts to ensure that our grants are working effectively and that our funding policy and practice is supporting long-term resilience.

We will continue to develop bids to support the arts sector's capital requirements, and will build on our evidence to support capital funding requests to support the sector with equipment and facilities to enable it

to operate effectively and continue to deliver high quality services.

We are keen to update evidence on demand and need in relation to studio provision in Belfast and will continue to work with DfC and Belfast City Council to commission a feasibility study and explore options.

Our top actions

- 1 Complete skills pipeline research in partnership with CC skills to establish skills shortages.
- 2 Explore improvements to AFS S75 data capture to establish workforce diversity.
- 3 Develop and implement a programme specifically to support organisations' succession planning and workforce development including upskilling.*
- 4 Invest in resilience and capacity building programmes.
- 5 Review evidence, demand and need in relation to studio provision in Belfast in partnership with DfC and BCC.*
- 6 Continue to support Capital bids should budget be available.

* Actions dependent on further resources



NI Opera's production of Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's 'Into The Woods' won Best Production at The Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards for 2022. Photo: Philip Magowan, Press Eye

Connect

Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

The Arts Council has a longstanding commitment to promote equality and has developed particular programmes which respond to the needs of marginalised groups such as older people, young people in deprived communities, as well as minority ethnic artists and their representation in public life. These objectives run through the overall strategic framework. This section focuses on D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists.

The Arts Council will implement the final year of its Equality Scheme¹⁰, which is a statement of its commitment to fulfilling its Section 75 duties. The Equality Monitoring Working Group was set up in 2013 as part of the Art Council's arrangements for assessing compliance with Section 75 duties. Its function is to provide strategic leadership for the outworking of the Equality Scheme by ensuring that equality and diversity is embedded across the organisation. Chaired by the Director of Strategic Development and Partnerships, the group meets regularly to review progress.

The Arts Council will implement the final year of its Disability Action Plan¹¹ which outlines the organisation's commitment to promoting positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourages participation in all aspects of the Arts.

Setting out a range of action points, the Disability Action Plan aims to ensure that people with a disability have the same opportunities to avail of investment in the Arts, including the employment of persons with a disability in the arts sector. The plan builds on measures already taken by the Arts Council to promote inclusion and access, including funding the core costs for several Arts and Disability organisations, supporting artists through the Individual Disabled/Deaf Artists grants programme and ensuring equality of access to the Arts through the Equality and Access Standards initiative (EASI) administered through the University of Atypical.

Our work supporting D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists will be further enhanced by our partnership agreement with the University of Atypical to ensure D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists can access support during grant application processes.

The Disability Action Plan represents a clear statement of the Arts Council's ongoing commitment to fulfilling statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006).

We will develop Disability and Equality action plans for 2024–29 and monitor progress through the Equality Monitoring Working Group. We will continue our involvement as a partner in the UK wide Access Card Scheme and explore opportunities for the role of the scheme in Northern Ireland.

Our top actions

- 1 Complete final progress report of Disability action plan and submit to the Equality Commission.
- 2 Continue involvement in the UK wide disability access card implementation group and trial in NI.*

Connecting to strategic partners

The Arts Council works directly with a range of vital strategic partners; ensuring that grant programmes and strategic initiatives reach those most in need of intervention. Creativity and the arts have been shown to impact on wellbeing, place-making, tourism and stimulate educational engagement. The creative industries are a vital element to the NI economy. To best contribute to Programme for Government the development of cross cutting partnerships are essential.

We will continue to build our existing partnership with our Sponsor Department (DfC) which will be particularly important in the development of a cross-cutting arts, cultural and heritage strategy.

The Arts Council has also been working with stakeholders to ground relationships with the local authorities, ensuring the Arts are integral to local Community Plans and local integrated arts strategies. Pioneering work has already been done in previous years highlighting the significant contribution the Arts can make to urban renewal and regeneration, tackling inequalities and contributing to social cohesion.

We will continue to explore options for developing a pilot data capture of arts activity with local authorities outside Belfast in 2023–24, with the intention of rolling out to all Local Authorities in 2024–25.

We will work with An Chomhairle Ealaíon to invest, develop and open a North/South touring programme to encourage arts organisations and individuals to extend tours across the border.

Building on our partnership with Tourism NI and the success of 'Embrace the Place', an animation of four key tourism sites across NI, we will continue strategic engagement with Tourism NI to unlock opportunities for the arts. We will also maintain our important relationships with The Baring Foundation, Public Health Agency, Education Authority and The Executive Office to deliver arts programmes that strongly deliver against cross-departmental government outcomes.

Our top actions

- 1 Continue to work with local authorities on data capture to build a strategic picture of the creative sector in NI.
- 2 Develop and open a North/South touring programme.*
- 3 Continue strategic engagement with Tourism NI to unlock opportunities for arts in NI.

* Actions dependent on further resources

¹⁰ Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities designated for the purposes of the Act to co (artscouncil-ni.org)

¹¹ ACNI-Disability-Action-Plan-2019-2024.pdf (artscouncil-ni.org)

* Actions dependent on further resources

National and international representation

Working internationally is key to developing a vibrant, open and welcoming place with creativity at its heart. The arts and artists from Northern Ireland have made a huge impact on the world stage. However, it was one of our key areas of work to be affected by COVID-19.

The Arts Council's International Policy expresses our commitment to and ambitions for trans-national interaction for the arts sector. Working closely with the British Council and other key partners, the Arts Council will ensure that Northern Ireland's arts organisations, artists and arts can connect internationally and develop an international perspective through profiling work, exchanging ideas and developing relationships. We are also a member of the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA) and will continue to develop important relationships through that network.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland and An Chomhairle Ealaíon have been working together to develop the Arts for the past thirty-nine years. This cooperation takes many forms and includes an annual plenary session that receives reports from the joint North South Working Group.

The work plan for 2023–24 comprises support for a comprehensive range of arts organisations delivering services on an all island basis. A Chair of Poetry and an all island Children's Laureate have been established through this mechanism. In November 2022, Paul Muldoon was announced as the new Ireland Professor of Poetry.

The Arts Council also has long-standing relationships with the other Arts Councils in the UK. The 2023–24 work plan includes:

- Joint working to promote the National Lottery Good Causes strategy with the National Lottery Promotions Unit
- Continuing with agreed actions such as commissioning opportunities with the Performing Rights Society for composers from NI
- We will share intelligence about the impact of Brexit on our arts and cultural sector through the Four Nations Initiative and Arts Infopoint
- Joint working on the Cultural Bridges programme to promote and strengthen artistic and cultural exchange with UK and Germany.

We will review our international work in conjunction with our partners and the British Council to maximise vital showcasing, networking and residency opportunities for artists. We will seek to strengthen the arts sector's role in enhancing NI's tourism product by developing compelling visitor experiences.

We recognise the importance of digital content in reaching audiences nationally and internationally. We will commission a bespoke digital training programme based on sectoral needs to support development. We will also continue to invest in umbrella organisations who support practitioners through the creation of networks and provide training and professional development.

Our top actions

- 1 Commission a bespoke digital training programme to support sector development.*
- 2 Invest in resource organisations to support practitioners through the creation of networks and the provision of training and professional development.
- 3 Sustain international residencies and showcasing opportunities to enhance the global reputation of artists from Northern Ireland.

* Actions dependent on further resources



Tumble Circus perform their 'Winter Circus 2022' in their iconic Big Top in Belfast city centre. Photo: Neal Campbell

Lead

Engaging with the sector

In November 2021 the Arts Council launched and established the Minority Ethnic and Rural Deliberative Forums respectively. They are pilot projects set up to specifically engage with and work in partnership with minority ethnic artists, and artists living and working in rural areas. Both Forums act as an interface between Arts Council partners, Freelancers in the arts sector, wider community, voluntary and statutory sectors.

The Forums aim to give a voice to under-represented groups by involving individuals beyond those traditionally associated with decision-making, and specifically those from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Each Forum will be responsible for addressing key issues and barriers that artists face, and will be artist-led i.e. forming the agendas and direction of the planned priorities and outcomes for each Forum. The Arts Council will ensure that artists have been listened to and key outcomes will be incorporated into future strategies and policies. Hence maximising the participation of artists in key decisions that affect them; and addressing key obstacles that minority ethnic and rural artists face.

The outcomes from these forums in FY22–23 resulted in two specific programme interventions; the Rural Engagement Arts Programme and the Minority Ethnic residencies and mentoring programme. We will evaluate the outcomes from these programmes to inform future interventions.

We will continue to engage with the sector and work collaboratively to develop bids to DfC, where appropriate, to support organisations and creative practitioners through the cost of living crisis.

Sectoral engagement will be vital to the development of the 2024–29 strategic framework and we will be sharing plans for strategy development early in FY23–24.

Our top actions

- 1 Continue to advocate and develop bids to DfC to evidence additional budget requirements to support organisations post-COVID and through the cost of living crisis.
- 2 Continue to support two, independently facilitated deliberative forums a) minority ethnic DF b) rural DF.
- 3 Develop 2024–29 strategic framework.

Valuing the creative sector

The Arts Council delivers a comprehensive programme of research and evaluation.

Our research programme aims to:

- Build evidence-based knowledge and understanding of the role and impact of the arts on people's lives;
- Identify patterns of engagement and factors affecting engagement in the arts; and
- Help create more diverse, equal and confident communities by addressing inequalities as they relate to race, disability and gender.

Strategic Development has lead responsibility for the Arts Council's research, policy development and planning functions. It gathers information, analyses data, evaluates programmes and generates evidence, in an open and accountable way, to inform the decision making process. The team also has responsibility for meeting the Arts Council's equality and disability compliance duties.

We will ensure evidence and impact play a central role in the development of the 2024–29 strategic framework and continue to use evidence to support campaigns and case studies.

Our funding programmes have been important interventions to support arts organisations and artists. We will continue to develop and open relevant programmes using Exchequer and National Lottery funds and evaluate the impacts of the programmes to support the case for further investment.

We will continue to develop programmes with a range of public and philanthropic funders to achieve broader social outcomes. For example, The Arts & Older People Programme is aimed at stimulating arts engagement amongst vulnerable and isolated older people and continues to make a difference to many people's lives. Jointly funded by the Public Health Agency and the Baring Foundation, we will promote the achievements of the recent 29 projects being delivered.

Our top actions

- 1 Continue to develop and open relevant grant funding programmes for artists and organisations.
- 2 Ring-fence budget to support emerging artists, either through SIAP or a separate programme.
- 3 Develop and implement a strategic development programme for FY23–24.
- 4 Continue to make the case for a better resourced arts sector.
- 5 Commission evaluations of strategic programmes.
- 6 Capture the value of the arts through communication campaigns, case studies and video interviews.
- 7 Build ongoing relations with a range of public and philanthropic funders to achieve broader social outcomes.



Gilly Campbell, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, with members of the cast of Stage Beyond's 'The Great Dictator', which shone a light on how people with disabilities and learning difficulties have been persecuted in the past. Photo: Brian Morrison

Organisational Objectives

Improving operations and service

We are committed to improving our performance, ensuring that we have the focus, innovation and adaptability to face an ever-changing environment.

This includes:

- Being flexible within the constraints of existing resources;
- Re-purposing funds to meet immediate need;
- Close collaboration with our Sponsor government department, including co-design of any required future funding programmes; and
- Streamlining how we collect data to demonstrate impact.

We recognise the importance of investing in our people and their learning development, strengthening relationships with our clients and ensuring that our grant programmes and processes work effectively and create a culture of partnership with our stakeholders.

We have committed to ongoing learning and development and prioritise training for all staff in relation to gender and sexual orientation, racial equality and D/deaf, disability and neurodiversity. We will reflect and learn and ensure this is reflected in our engagement with applicants and partners.

We are also committed to improving how we collect and use data to support how we demonstrate impact socially, culturally, environmentally and economically. We will work with the sector to ensure we measure outcomes effectively as well as outputs and activity.



2022 Major Individual Artist Award recipients, dance-maker Eileen McClory, visual artist Jennifer Trouton, opera singer Giselle Allen, poet and performer Alice McCullough, composer Greg Caffrey.

Digital Developments

Since the global pandemic, the Arts Council's priority has been to continue to digitise as many processes and procedures as possible, in order to work flexibly and increase access to the arts.

The additional demands placed on the Arts Council's website over the last couple of years simply exacerbated the problems associated with legacy software and out-dated technology that currently surround the website. The Arts Council will launch a new website at the end of FY22–23 and continue to gather user feedback to ensure the design is user friendly.

The definition of digital is complex as digital technology has permeated every aspect of daily life, including artistic practice. This ranges from the technology used to create art, the technology used to capture art, the technology used to disseminate art, and technology to administrate art.

We will continue to support artwork created exclusively in the digital space through our Creative Industries programmes but also work across art forms internally to determine how to categorise other digital support and how to support it through either existing programme interventions or new ones.

The Arts Council will continue to use its website and all of its social media platforms to communicate relevant arts funding content, to showcase our artists and arts organisations to the world, and to make the case for the arts in NI.



The Playhouse in partnership with The John & Pat Hume Foundation present 'HUME—Beyond Belief—The Life and Mission of John and Pat Hume', featuring Conor O'Kane as John Hume and Naoimh Morgan as Pat Hume. March/April 2023. Photo: Kieran Griffiths

Funding

The Arts Council receives expenditure funds from two main sources: Exchequer funding from the NI Budget through DfC and Lottery funds from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

The 'indicative' Exchequer budget figure (Resource) is £9,708,000 a 5% cut from 22–23 (£10,197,000). This is significantly challenging for us to deliver against the actions within this plan.

The Net Lottery income for the year is forecast at £9,481,000 (FY22–23 £9,948,000).

The 'indicative' Exchequer Capital budget is £1,050,000 (FY 22/23 £499,000)

In the current economic climate, the Arts Council is constantly reviewing its overhead costs. The budget for 2023–24 is £648,000.

The Arts Council continues to monitor costs rigorously to ensure we meet our statutory guidelines and maintain corporate governance standards.

We are developing business cases to the Department to secure capital resources to deliver four different programmes. These will cover health and safety equipment, musical instruments for bands, small items of equipment and minor works, groups and individuals and the purchase of artwork for the collection which in turn will support artists.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Headline Achievements 2022–23

1. Introduction

The Arts Council's annual programme of funding and research for 2022–23, and the sample of highlight events listed below, reflect a return to more normal circumstances, following the extraordinary upheaval caused in the preceding years as a result of the pandemic. That serious challenges remain for the sector is evident, due to, for example, the legacy of the pandemic, the implications of withdrawal from the EU and the significant additional pressures associated with the current cost of living crisis. Despite the many challenges, artists and arts organisations nevertheless continued throughout 2022–23 to demonstrate their resolve and ambition, inspiring audiences throughout Northern Ireland with great art.

2. Funding Programmes

Organisations Digital Evolution Awards April 2022

Arts Council awards £40,000 National Lottery funds to support arts organisations in the creation of four innovative arts projects.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-40000-funding-to-support-digital-art>

Creative Industries Seed Fund April 2022

Arts Council, in collaboration with Future Screens NI, awards £100,000 National Lottery funds to assist arts organisations, entrepreneurs and

creative businesses to undertake projects that contribute to the growth of the creative industries and unlock future income generation.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-recipients-of-100000-digital-arts-programme>

Small Grants Programme 'Rolling' applications

Arts Council provides professional arts organisations and community groups with National Lottery-funded grants between £500–£10,000 to support projects in any art form. Over 70 awards totaling more than £392,000 made in 2022–23.

WOMEX Bursaries 2022 July 2022

Arts Council provides bursaries of £650 for three artists to attend the WOMEX world music expo in Portugal.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/womex-world-music-expo-2022-bursaries-now-available-to-attend>

Annual Funding Programme, 2022–23 July 2022

Arts Council awards £13,012,490 (largely standstill funding) through its Exchequer and National Lottery funds to 95 arts organisations to support the core and programming costs of organisations that are central to the arts infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/acni-announces-annual-funding-programme-awards-22-23>

Lottery Project Funding, 2022–23 July 2022

Arts Council awards grants totalling over £2 million to support the development of high-quality arts activities across Northern Ireland.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/new-play-on-life-and-work-of-john-hume-among-arts-council-awards>

Beyond Borders July 2022

PRS Foundation's 'Beyond Borders' co-commissioning and touring programme opens for applications from organisations, music groups and composers, supported by the five arts councils on these islands.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/prs-foundations-beyond-borders-opens-for-applications>

ARTiculate Young People and Wellbeing Arts Programme September 2022

Arts Council re-opens the ARTiculate programme with National Lottery funding of £170,000 for youth, community and voluntary groups to develop arts based projects, targeted at improving the health and wellbeing of young people.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-funding-targeted-at-improving-young-peoples-health>

Minority Ethnic Artists and Residency Scheme October 2022

Arts Council announces National Lottery awards for 13 artists, worth a total of £50,000, to support the work of minority ethnic artists and creative practitioners living in Northern Ireland.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/13-minority-ethnic-artists-awarded-funding-to-support-their-careers>

Rural Engagement Arts Programme October 2022

Arts Council announces the first round of funding through its new, three-year, £1.5 million programme, offering grants of up to £10,000 through its National Lottery funds to support the delivery of arts projects benefitting rurally-based communities. £500,000 is awarded to 73 rurally-based arts projects across Northern Ireland.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-funding-to-support-73-rurally-based-arts-projects>

Major Individual Artists Awards 2022 October 2022

The Arts Council recognizes the contribution of four acclaimed artists to the arts in Northern Ireland with awards of £15,000, through its National Lottery fund. Opera singer Giselle Allen, composer Greg Caffrey, poet and performer Alice McCullough, dance maker Eileen McClory and visual artist Jennifer Trouton, receive the highest value honour bestowed on artists in Northern Ireland each year.

Leading NI artists honoured with Major Awards by Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

<https://artscouncil-ni.org/news/leading-ni-artists-honoured-with-major-awards-by-arts-council>

Support for Individual Artists Programme November 2022

Arts Council awards £985,000 through its National Lottery funds to support 262 artists working across all disciplines.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/262-artists-receive-national-lottery-funding-to-support-their-work>

Artists Career Enhancement Scheme November 2022

Arts Council awards £84,000 of its National Lottery funds to support 12 exceptional emerging and mid-career artists in creating new work and developing their careers.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-funding-to-support-12-exceptional-artists>

Individual Artists Digital Evolution Awards December 2022

Arts Council awards £40,000 through its National Lottery funds to five individual artists to support the creation of high-quality arts projects using innovative digital technologies.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-40000-for-innovative-digital-arts-projects>

Commissioning Programme for Organisations December 2022

Arts Council awards £200,000 of National Lottery funding to support 21 arts organisations in the creation of new, high-quality, innovative works.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-commissions-21-new-works-thanks-to-national-lottery>

Organisations Digital Evolution Awards December 2022

Arts Council awards £40,000 through its National Lottery funds to support four arts organisations in the creation of four innovative digital arts projects.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/quotidian-big-telly-theatre-armstrong-storytelling-void-to-share-in-40000-l>

Arts & Older People Programme December 2022

Arts Council awards £209,000 of National Lottery funding to support 29 arts organisations across Northern Ireland in delivering a series of community-based arts projects benefitting older people.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/older-people-to-benefit-from-209000-national-lottery-funding>

Young Musicians' Platform Award January 2023

BBC Northern Ireland and the Arts Council through its National Lottery funds support six exceptionally talented young musicians, with funding awards of up to £5,000 each, plus showcasing and mentoring opportunities.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/six-exceptional-musicians-awarded-young-musicians-platform-award>

Creative Industries Seed Fund February 2023

Arts Council awards £95,000 of National Lottery funding to support four arts organisations in the creation of new innovative digital arts projects.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/creative-industries-seed-fund-announcement-feb23>

3. Publications

Annual Funding Survey, 2021–22 September 2022

Findings from the Arts Council's Annual Funding Survey show how the Covid-19 pandemic continued to have a significant and long lasting impact on arts organisations in 2021–22, from planning and programming through to staffing and finances.

<https://artscouncil-ni.org/news/new-survey-reveals-arts-organisations-in-ni-remain-under-significant-post-c>

Annual Review, 2021–22 January 2023

Arts Council publishes its Annual Review 2021–22, recounting many of the highlights of the (financial) Year in the Arts in Northern Ireland, supported by Arts Council exchequer funding from the Department of Communities as well as National Lottery funds.

<https://artscouncil-ni.s3-assets.com/ACNI-Annual-Review-2021-22.pdf>

Consultation Report on Access Scheme for Disabled Audiences February 2023

Arts Council publishes the findings of its consultation on the potential introduction to Northern Ireland of a UK-wide Access Scheme for disabled, D/deaf and neurodivergent audiences members buying tickets for creative and cultural events and venues.

<https://artsCouncil-ni.org/resources/disability-access-research-report>

Evaluations of Arts Council Covid Recovery programmes February 2023

Arts Council publishes survey-based evaluations of its two Covid Recovery programmes, co-designed with the Department for Communities to help the creative sector re-establish itself following the relaxation of coronavirus pandemic restrictions in 2021.

<https://artsCouncil-ni.org/resources/creative-individuals-recovery-programme-cirp-evaluation-3>

<https://artsCouncil-ni.org/resources/covid-recovery-programme-for-arts-organisations-crpa-evaluation>

4. Highlights

Irish Pages named 'Small Publisher of the Year 2022' May 2022

The Irish Pages Press/Cló An Mhíl Bhuí wins the 'British Book Awards Small Publisher of the Year 2022 (Island of Ireland)', making it the first Northern Ireland winner in the publishing category of the awards.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/irish-pages-press-named-small-publisher-of-the-year-2022-island-of-ireland>

£150,000 disabled-led programme to improve digital technology skills for artists May 2022

The University of Atypical for Arts and Disability opens a new three-year, £150,000 disabled-led digital technology professional development programme for artists.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/new-150k-disabled-led-programme-to-improve-digital-technology-skills>

Sheila Llewellyn wins Gordon Bowker Volcano Prize June 2022

Arts Council of Northern Ireland ACES awardee Sheila Llewellyn's book, 'Winter in Tabriz' (Sceptre, Hodder & Stoughton), wins the prestigious Gordon Bowker Volcano Prize at the 2022 Society of Authors Awards.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/sheila-llewellyn-wins-gordon-bowker-volcano-prize>

Stage Beyond's take on Chaplin classic to shine a light on people with disabilities June 2022

Stage Beyond, the theatre company for adults with learning disabilities based in Derry, returns with its first live theatre production since the COVID-19 pandemic, to shine a light on how people with disabilities and learning difficulties have been persecuted in the past, with their unique take on 'The Great Dictator' at the Millennium Forum.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/stage-beyond-take-on-chaplin-classic>

Arts Council joins world-leading Harkin Summit to lead discussion on Arts and Disability June 2022

The Arts Council chairs a panel on 'Arts and Disability and the Pandemic – a Creative Response' at The Harkin Summit in Belfast, only the second time ever that this leading conference has been delivered outside the USA.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-joins-the-world-leading-harkin-summit-to-lead-discussion-on-th>

BAFTA-nominated chiptune composer, Niamh Houston, reveals details of videogame installation project July 2022

Chiptune Musician and Composer Niamh Houston launches

TieYourLaces, an immersive digital art game developed with £25,000 from the Creative Industries Seed Fund, which combines laser-tracking technology and original music in a video game installation designed to encourage users of any ability to become more physically active.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/niamh-houston-reveals-details-of-videogame>

Arts Council of Northern Ireland presents to the House of Commons Select Committee July 2022

Arts Council gives evidence to the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee about the impact of the Creative Cluster initiative on NI's Creative Industries.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/acni-presents-to-the-house-of-commons-select-committee>

Young podcasters from GSCA create podcasts to promote positive mental health and wellbeing August 2022

Popular youth-led podcast series 'Spill the Tae', created by young people in Derry-Londonderry along with Greater Shantallow Community Arts' Studio 2, responds to the declining mental health of their peers, with the aim of promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/young-podcasters-from-greater-shantallow-community-arts-visit-bbc-radio-uls>

New performing arts studio opens as Bounce celebrates 10th Anniversary September 2022

The University of Atypical for Arts and Disability opens the Ledger Studio, a new performing arts space as part of its celebration of the tenth anniversary of Bounce Arts Festival.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/new-performing-arts-studio-opens-as-bounce-celebrates-10th-anniversary>

Belfast International Arts Festival opens 60th Anniversary Programme August 2022

The Belfast International Arts Festival delivers its diamond anniversary edition, with a programme of events addressing the current and future nature and role of arts and culture in society, the contemporary issues that are influencing our international artists, and Northern Ireland's place in the global world.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/belfast-international-arts-festival-reveals-60th-autumn-programme>

Northern Ireland's newest live music venue opens its doors in Bangor October 2022

Following seven years of fundraising, lobbying, planning and extensive refurbishment by Open House Festival, The Court House on Bangor seafront finally opens its doors to the public.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/northern-irelands-newest-live-music-venue-opens-its-doors-in-bangor-city>

Arts Council highlights cost of living crisis for NI arts sector October 2022

The Arts Council presents evidence, alongside the Arts Collaboration Network, to the All Party Group on the Arts at Stormont, highlighting the impact on the arts sector of rising energy and living costs.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-highlights-cost-of-living-crisis-for-ni-arts-sector>

Lyric Theatre wins 'Theatre of the Year' January 2023

The Lyric Theatre in Belfast wins 'Theatre of the Year' at the Stage Awards 2023, which celebrate the best of the UK theatre industry.

<https://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/lyric-theatre-wins-prestigious-theatre-of-the-year-at-uk-theatre-industry-awards>

Award-winning drama reflecting struggles of living in care system is showcased in Brussels February 2023

One of Northern Ireland's leading theatre companies, Prime Cut Productions, takes to the stage of the Bozar Theatre in Brussels with its critically acclaimed production, 'Removed', as part of the Brussels Platform showcase of arts and culture from Northern Ireland.

<https://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/award-winning-drama-reflecting-struggles-of-living-in-care-system-to-be-showcased-in-brussels>

'An Irish Goodbye' wins Best Short Film at the Oscars March 2023

Winner of Best British Short Film at the EE BAFTA Awards goes on to win Best Live Action Short Film at the 96th Academy Awards in Los Angeles.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/james-martin-ross-white-set-their-sights-on-winning-an-oscar-award>

Arts & Business NI Blueprint investment programme March 2023

The first round of Blueprint investment grants, totalling £765,000 over the next two years, supports 17 organisations in a long-term approach to growth and generating income, developing new projects and building skills.

<http://artsCouncil-ni.org/news/17-arts-organisations-receive-investment-from-arts-business>

Appendix 2

Resource Allocation

Table 1. 2023–24 Resource Allocation by Programme

| Programme | Exchequer (£) Resource | Lottery (£) | Total (£) |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Annual Funding | 7,885,000 | 5,042,000 | 12,927,000 |
| Arts & Older People | | 175,000 | 175,000 |
| Cross Border Touring | | 200,000 | 200,000 |
| Creative Schools | | 165,000 | 165,000 |
| NI Screen | | 113,000 | 113,000 |
| Project Funding | | 2,250,000 | 2,250,000 |
| Rural Arts | | 490,000 | 490,000 |
| Small Grants | | 375,000 | 375,000 |
| Commissioning | | 200,000 | 200,000 |
| Support for Individual Artists (SIAP) | 28,000 | 1,504,000 | 1,532,000 |
| Young People and Wellbeing | | 135,000 | 135,000 |
| Creative Industries | | 175,000 | 175,000 |
| Mental Health | | 150,000 | 150,000 |
| Arts Development Fund | 335,000 | | 335,000 |
| Staff Costs | 1,058,000 | 1,303,000 | 2,361,000 |
| Overheads | 290,000 | 357,000 | 648,000 |
| Strategic Development | 82,000 | | 82,000 |
| Safeguarding | 28,000 | | 28,000 |
| Lottery: Other Operating Costs Direct | | 201,000 | 201,000 |
| Total | 9,707,000 | 12,834,000 | 2,541,000 |

Appendix 3

Programme Overview 2022–23

Table 1. Routine Programmes FY22–23

| Programme | Fund | No. | Value of Awards (£) | Decision Date |
|--|-----------------------|------------|---------------------|--|
| Annual Funding Programme | Lottery and Exchequer | 95 | 14,716,490 | 26 April 2022 — interim; May 2022 — full; January 2023 — uplifts |
| Arts & Older People | Lottery | 29 | 209,743 | 2 September 2022 |
| Arts Development Fund | Lottery and Exchequer | 3 | 47,230 | Various |
| Cathedral Building Fire Funding | Exchequer | 13 | 154,696 | 25 January 2023 |
| CISF II | Lottery | 4 | 99,982 | 11 April 2022 |
| CISF III | Lottery | 4 | 95,000 | 2 February 2023 |
| Commissioning Programme | Lottery | 21 | 200,000 | 14 February 2023 |
| DfC Monitoring Round | Exchequer | 7 | 475,830 | Various |
| Health & Safety Capital Programme | Exchequer | 56 | 699,625 | 7 September 2022; 7 December 2022 |
| Individual Artists Digital Evolution Programme | Lottery | 5 | 40,000 | 14 November 2022 |
| Lottery — Project Funding | Lottery | 66 | 2,041,447 | 22 June 2022 |
| Organisations Digital Evolution Awards | Lottery | 4 | 38,744 | 15 December 2022 |
| Rural Engagement Arts Programme | Lottery | 72 | 498,454 | 7 October 2022 |
| SIAP | Lottery | 361 | 1,349,610 | Various |
| Small Grants Programme | Lottery | 107 | 556,537 | Various |
| Young People and Wellbeing Arts Programme | Lottery | 24 | 190,522 | 18 November 2022 |
| Total | | 872 | 21,415,324 | |

Appendix 4

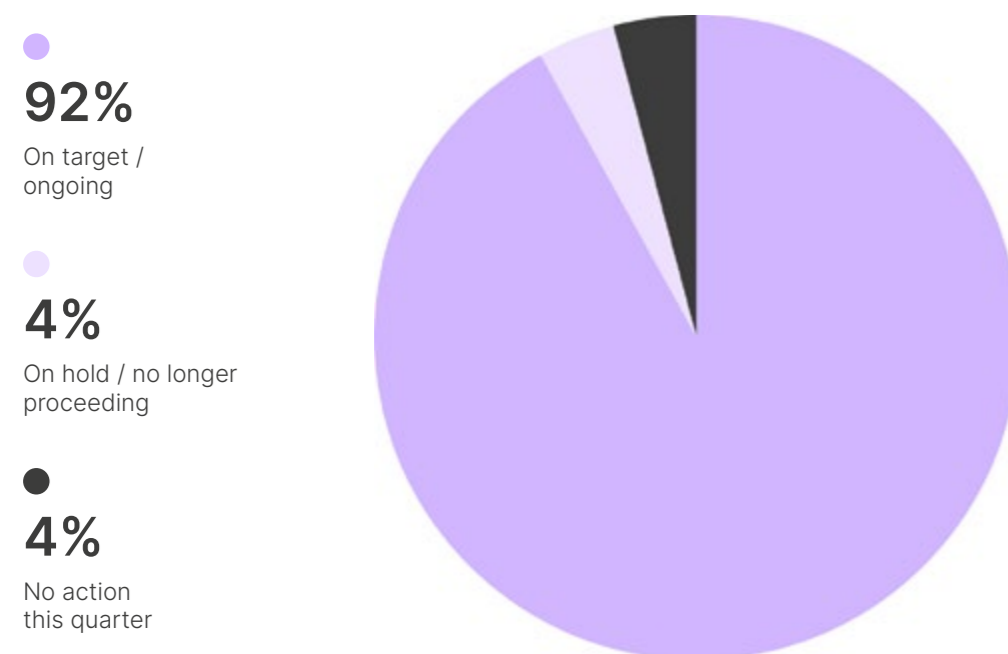
Performance Measurement

Our Progress in FY22-23

In FY22-23 we had 24 dedicated business plan actions that were monitored quarterly. At the end of FY22-23 the progress was as follows:

| Status | Q4 Progress (RAG) |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| On target / ongoing | 22 |
| On hold / no longer proceeding | 1 |
| Completed | 1 |
| Total | 24 |

Summary of Progress



Our Progress against Strategic Framework

FY22-23 was the fourth year in our five year strategic framework (2019-24). The table below quantifies progress against actions specified in the original plan using the RAG status and KPIs. This analysis was conducted in Q2 of Y4.

| Status | No. | % |
|---------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Completed | 35 | 66% |
| Not completed | 8 | 15% |
| Partially completed | 10 | 19% |
| Total | 53 | 100% |



| Further Detail | No. | % |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Completed | 35 | 66% |
| Due for completion 2023-24 | 1 | 2% |
| Insufficient budget | 6 | 11% |
| Insufficient capacity | 5 | 9% |
| No longer relevant | 2 | 4% |
| Other | 4 | 8% |
| Total | 53 | 100% |

| Status | Connect | Inspire | Lead |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Completed | 10 | 10 | 15 |
| Not completed | 1 | 5 | 2 |
| Partially completed | 7 | 2 | 1 |
| Total | 18 | 17 | 18 |

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