



Annual Business Plan 2022–23

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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.

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.

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 country'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, encourage collaboration, leverage additional funding and expertise through key partners and encourage 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.



'Air of the Anthropocene', Robin Price's environmental photographic artwork.

Five Year Strategic Framework — Summary Objectives

Inspire

- Excellence
- Vibrant infrastructure
- Invest in workforce development and skills
- Invest in career pathways
- Renew art form policies
- 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)

Strategic Context

NI Executive

This business plan reflects the fourth 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: the 2016–21 development of a Programme for Government (PfG); the pressure to protect 'frontline services' and manage within reduced public funding; the need to encourage resilience within the sector and promote, where appropriate, the use of shared services, all against the backdrop of the impact of COVID-19. We will be flexible and will respond to emerging priorities. The NI Executive is developing a new strategic, outcomes-based Programme for Government (PfG), the draft outcomes of which were consulted upon from January to March 2021. The Arts Council response² demonstrates the role of arts and culture in supporting the Executive to meet its strategic objectives.

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.

We will continue to gather and present evidence to the Communities Committee and the All Party Group on Arts, encouraging political parties to commit to supporting the arts, recognise the important contribution of the arts to society and the need for appropriate investment.

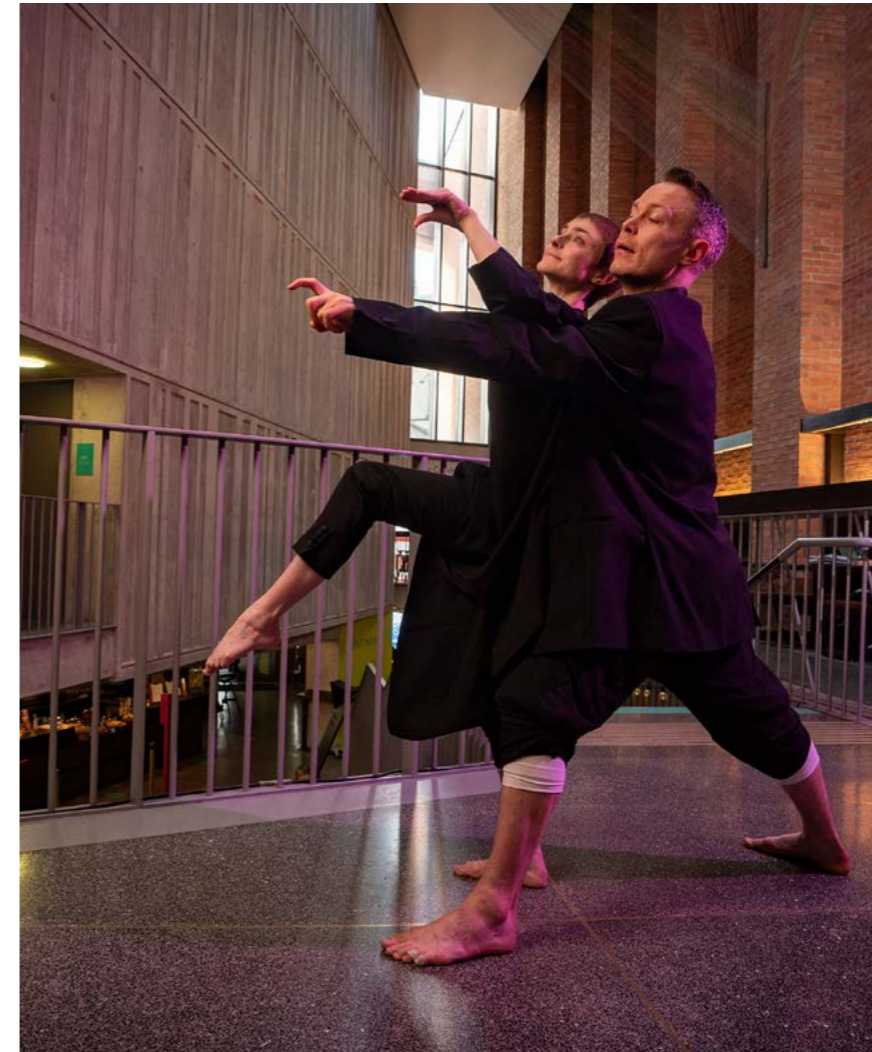
The strength of artistic achievement in NI is recognised and forms part of a new cultural programme entitled UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK. This is a UK-wide initiative to celebrate creativity by combining science, technology, engineering arts and mathematics through the showcasing of 10 inspiring collaborative projects across the UK. People can experience UNBOXED in person, TV, radio and online for free between March–October 2022.

Despite challenging times, the cultural sector continues to thrive and innovate in NI. 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 look forward to working with Belfast City Council to support their proposed initiatives aligned to our own youth music strategy.

However, arts organisations continue to rely on public funding to help them navigate their way out of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of which still threatens to undermine our fragile ecosystem.

We will continue to support portfolio funded organisations and will build awareness of funding opportunities available through 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 engaged fully in the work of the Ministerial Culture, Arts and Heritage Recovery Taskforce in 2021 and stands ready to continue to support the implementation of its recommendations³. We thank Minister Hargey for her leadership in securing the extra resources needed for the arts sector at that time.



Maiden Voyage Dance, 'MORF'. Belfast Children's Festival.

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.

Implications of Withdrawal from the EU

COVID-19 and the UK's departure from the European Union present a double challenge to international working and will continue to impact on the movement of artists to and from Northern Ireland. We will continue to consult with local artists and touring organisations to understand the impact of new legislation and work with our colleagues across the island of Ireland and the UK to create new international opportunities, including digital connection and exchange.

The strong historical relationship that we have with colleagues in An Chomhairle Ealaíon continues to be significant and we are actively exploring joint initiatives such as an all-island touring programme and the Taoiseach's Shared Island initiative which builds on the framework of support we already offer to our jointly funded clients.

Our important East/West relationship with colleagues in Scotland, England and Wales has also been vital, as we 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.

² <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-PfG-Response-22-March-2021.pdf>

³ The Art of Recovery (communities-ni.gov.uk)

Environmental Impact

It is clear that many of the organisations we fund are adapting to the environmental challenges facing us. Some are using virtual communications technology as an alternative to travel and sustainable methods in arts-based programming to power creative expression and build greater awareness of environmental issues at a community level.

The Arts Council also recognises its own responsibility to ensure funded organisations recognise their obligation to protect the environment when carrying out their work. In the 2020-21 Stability and Renewal Programme for Organisations, we asked organisations to demonstrate how they align to 'minimising negative environmental impacts and promoting positive ones.' Actions identified highlight the numerous initiatives organisations are undertaking to rise to the challenge of climate change. As well as developing dedicated environmental policies and action plans, many are building dedicated environmental actions into their programming.

The Arts Council 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 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.

Our work in this area will be greatly enhanced by the Northern Ireland Assembly climate change legislation and targets for emissions cuts. This will provide a clearly defined policy framework in which the Arts Council can operate to mitigate and adapt to climate change through its grant programmes.

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.



Greater Shantallow Community Arts, one of 13 key arts organisations in the Derry-Londonderry and Strabane area to receive Arts Council support through the Annual Funding Programme



Right
Arts Council and Future Screens NI support innovative partnerships using the arts in new and emerging digital, immersive technologies.



Multi-award winning 'Old Friends and Other Days'. Original Concept and Direction Cameron Menzies, Northern Ireland Opera. Image @Ste Murray

Recovering from COVID-19

The Business Plan for 2022–23 reflects the context of a society that is slowly recovering from the COVID pandemic. The fragile and vital arts sector in NI has been exponentially affected. The Arts Council engaged directly with the sector in 2021–22 to hear about the impacts of emergency financial interventions and future needs.

We ran a survey in May 2021 which told us that:

Artists and Creative Practitioners⁴

- 97% sustained significant loss of earnings as result of the pandemic; 74% lost more than half their income.
- £12,960 was the average loss of earnings.
- Artists experienced a high level of hardship and social disadvantage, with 74% forced to curtail all non-essential spending; 22% struggled to meet basic food costs.
- 36% said they would have ceased trading without emergency funding.
- 84% reported that their grant had alleviated immediate stress; however, 50% were less optimistic about their longer-term financial security.
- 77% were able to create new artistic content for use in the future, thanks to their grant.
- 83% used their grant to develop new skills that will help them adapt to the new operating environment.

Arts Organisations⁵

- 74% confirmed that, without the Emergency funding, they would have had to remove their creative programming entirely; 85% would have had to reduce their scale of activity.
- 80% reported that their grant had alleviated their immediate financial stress.
- 58% used the funding to cover deficit or loss of income.
- 67% have been able to protect jobs and retain skills through the pandemic, thanks to the funding.
- Over two-thirds used their grant to maintain engagement with audiences; 48% enhanced their services online.
- 94% stated that more support was still required to guarantee long-term financial stability, with only 31% confident their organisation would remain financially stable to the end of the 2020/21 financial year.

Findings from our latest Annual Funding Survey⁶, released in November 2021, further acknowledged the impact COVID-19 has had on the sector.

Losses in earned income, totalling £16m were offset, to an extent, by increased public sector funding, the most significant of which came from government's emergency funding rounds. Despite this, the sector's employment contracted by 25%, with freelance artists being particularly vulnerable to staff cuts. A surge in online and digital activity sought to compensate for the loss of face-to-face engagement, reaching an estimated 15m new and existing audiences.

We will continue to work with the Department to make the case to the Executive 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.

In 2021–22 we delivered £16,761,064 on eleven routine programmes. In addition to this we delivered £4,406,828 on two COVID recovery programmes to support artists, creative practitioners and arts organisations as the sector recovers from the devastating impacts of the pandemic on the arts in NI.

⁴ ACNI-Emergency-Grant-Programme-Artists.pdf (artscouncil-ni.org)

⁵ ACNI-Emergency-Grant-Programme-Organisations.pdf (artscouncil-ni.org)

⁶ ACNI-AFS-Headline-Report-2020-21.pdf (artscouncil-ni.org)



2022-23 Business Plan Actions

A Snapshot

Inspire

Resilience and Sustainability

- Annual Funding Survey
- Creative Industries Programme
- Skills Development Study
- Support A&BNI Blueprint Programme

Investing in the Future

- Creative Schools Partnership
- Review Art Form Policies
- ARTiculate Programme Promoting Positive Mental Health
- Advise DfC on Employability and Sectoral Skills Programme

Connect

Accessibility and Participation

- Report to the Equality Commission
- Disability Access Audit
- Work with University of Atypical
- Participate in UK Testing of Disability Access Card

Engagement

- Rural Needs Programme
- Local Authority Relationships and Data Agenda
- University Partnerships in Creative Industries
- Strategic Audience Development
- Digital Development Strategy and Website Launch

National and International Representation

- Belfast — Major City Centre Cultural and Visitor Attraction
- ‘Embrace the Place’ Strategic Planning Group
- International Residencies
- Support International Touring
- Four Nations Group and EU Exit Impacts

Lead

Demonstrating Impact

- Strategic Research and Development
- Evidence to Demonstrate Impact (COVID, Environmental etc.)
- Contribute to Communities Committee and APG on Arts
- Communications and Case Studies
- Understand Living and Working Conditions of Artists

Partnership Working

- Strategic Sectoral Partners to Support Professional Development
- DCSDC Resilience Programme
- Rural and Minority Ethnic Artists Deliberative Fora
- University Partnerships for Research Purposes
- Philanthropic Partnerships to Deliver Arts and Older People Programme

COVID Recovery

- Monitor Impacts of Recovery Programmes
- Continue to Monitor Impacts of COVID through Dedicated Surveys
- Work with DfC to implement Task Force Recommendations
- Contribute to a Broader Culture, Arts and Heritage Strategy

Left

Jasmine Morris is announced as the new Leader of the Ulster Youth Orchestra, and presented by the Arts Council with the famous Milton Violin to be played throughout her tenure as leader.

Inspire

Resilience and Sustainability

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 2021–22, The Arts Council supported 97 organisations by awarding £13m through Exchequer and National Lottery funds. In the context of funding constraints, and loss of income as a result of COVID-19, we aimed to mitigate the impact of spending reductions and protect 'frontline services'. We fostered the principles of adaptive resilience, encouraged arts organisations to collaborate with each other, and assessed commercial opportunities through new digital platforms. In collaboration with Arts & Business NI we raised awareness of the work of Trusts and Foundations and alternative forms of arts finance.

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

Together we will work with Arts & Business NI to implement the Blueprint programme and support Derry City and Strabane District Council to implement a new resilience programme for arts organisations in their area. 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.

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 29,000 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 only through partnership working can the Arts Council contribute towards its development. 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 Monitor the performance of our annually funded organisations, through regular meetings, quarterly reports and the Annual Funding Survey to ensure delivery against our strategy and wider Government priorities.
- 2 Continue to roll out and evaluate the Creative Industries programme of work in partnership with Future Screens NI to incentivise innovation and experimentation.
- 3 Continue to provide advisory support to A&BNI with the Blueprint programme to help organisations build their strategic planning capacity.
- 4 Commission a scoping study in partnership with DfC and universities in NI to further understand the creative industries and skills development needs. Signpost funded organisations to relevant skills and leadership development opportunities.
- 5 Provide advisory support to DfC's three year employability and sectoral skills programme.

Investing in the Future

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. We will continue to work with relevant partners in ensuring that there are proper career pathways and progression in our sector.

The Arts Council, 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 seek to secure joint funding opportunities for the ARTiculate programme which facilitates 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 creating the opportunities for artists to develop their artistic skills 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.

Talent acquisition, retention and development remains a big challenge. The Arts Council's recent research (Nov 2021)¹⁰ demonstrated clearly that the arts sector in particular, has been haemorrhaging talent during the pandemic; the workforce contracted by a quarter in 2019/20, as income levels and ticket sales collapsed during lockdown. We will work with DfC and key partners on a three-year employability and sectoral skills programme to ensure talented creative practitioners can develop and thrive and in the creative sector.

Our Top Actions

- 1 Invest in the Creative Schools Partnership (The Executive Office, Education Authority and Arts Council) to improve creative and educational outcomes for children living in deprived areas.
- 2 Implement a rolling art form policy review with music and drama in light of digital developments.
- 3 Continue to invest in ARTiculate programme promoting positive mental health and wellbeing amongst young people.
- 4 Work with DfC on the three-year employability and sectoral skills programme.

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⁷ *Inspire, Connect, Lead*, <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Draft-5-year-Strategic-Framework-for-Developing-the-Arts-2019-2024.pdf>

⁸ ACNI-AFS-Headline-Report-2020-21.pdf (artscouncil-ni.org)

⁹ Creative Industries economic estimates for Northern Ireland 2021 | Department for Communities (communities-ni.gov.uk)

¹⁰ ACNI-AFS-Headline-Report-2020-21.pdf (artscouncil-ni.org)

Connect

Accessibility and Participation

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 Equality Scheme¹¹, 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 Arts 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 Chief Executive the group meets quarterly to review progress.

The Arts Council will implement The Disability Action Plan¹² 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 Arts & Disability Equality Charter.

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). In recognition of the specific disadvantages faced by deaf and disabled artists particularly from COVID-19 we will ensure that, should we receive additional recovery funding for 2022–23, a proportion will be allocated to meet their needs and administered through the University of Atypical.

Our Top Actions

- 1 Continue to report progress of the Disability Action Plan annually to the Equality Commission.
- 2 Commission a disability access audit of venues (COVID dependent).
- 3 Work with University of Atypical to ensure d/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists can create their own work and access the arts fully.
- 4 Continue to participate in the UK-wide Access Card initiative with a view to implementing a pilot NI scheme.

The Arts Council has a longstanding commitment to promote equality and has developed particular programmes which respond to the needs of marginalised groups.

Engagement

We want more people to be able to choose to make the arts a part of their lives. Opportunity to engage and participate in the arts should not be determined by where you live or your background.

Efforts to increase engagement through arts and cultural events requires careful planning and long-term strategies which seek to reach people and demonstrate an understanding of their needs. We will work with our strategic partner Thrive to develop an audience development plan and to continue to understand audience motivations as we recover from COVID. We supported Thrive to be part of a UK-wide study to explore how the ever-changing restrictions and numerous lockdowns from the past year have impacted audiences' motivations and behaviours.¹³

The Arts Council has 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 explore options for developing a pilot survey of arts activity with two local authorities outside Belfast in 2022–23, with the intention of rolling out to all Local Authorities in 2023–24.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council (ACBCBC) submitted an Expression of Interest to the UK City of Culture 2025 competition run by DCMS. In October 2021 they were one of eight cities longlisted and invited to submit full bids for the title. We will support ACBCBC as a strategic partner to bring our insights, advice and guidance to the development and submission of the bid and consider future budget provision in the event of a successful bid as the expectation would be that cultural activity would commence in 2023.

The Arts Council is also aware of the challenges facing rural communities and the need for further development of the arts in these areas. Under our *Inspire* Principle, Objective 7, we commit to 'Inspire local communities to engage in transformative, high-quality arts experiences'. Associated actions include 'improving the regional and rural reach of funding through joint projects with local government, such as local place-based cultural initiatives; and strengthening arts activity in areas of low engagement'. We will develop a rural needs programme to support rural areas in 2022–23.

Our Top Actions

- 1 Work with Local Authorities to launch a Local Authority Expenditure survey to capture key fields within our Annual Funding Survey. This will strengthen our strategic picture of the arts as well as our monitoring frameworks, enabling us to improve our knowledge about patterns of engagement and provide robust evidence for advocacy purposes.
- 2 Launch a rural needs programme. £500k grant over 3 years.
- 3 Develop a strategic audience development plan through our partnership with Thrive.
- 4 Continue to build the working partnership with Future Screens NI, University of Ulster and Queens University Belfast to create research and career opportunities for artists.
- 5 Launch a digital development strategy for the arts sector and new Arts Council website.

¹¹ 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)

¹² ACNI-Disability-Action-Plan-2019-2024.pdf (artscouncil-ni.org)

¹³ <https://wewillthrive.co.uk/audience-insights/reports/missing-audiences-in-northern-ireland-wave-1-findings>

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.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland and An Chomhairle Ealaíon have been working together to develop the Arts for the past thirty-eight 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 2022–23 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 and opportunities for the resumption of North-South touring are under discussion.

The Arts Council also has long-standing relationships with the other Arts Councils in the UK. The 2022–23 work plan includes:

- Joint working to promote the National Lottery Good Causes strategy with the National Lottery Promotions Unit
- Evaluating the impact of COVID-19 across the different nations and sharing responses to the situation
- 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.

NI has rich cultural heritage assets which have untapped visitor potential. Working in partnership with the Historic Environment Division, Tourism NI and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we will continue to collaborate on a wider programme to understand audience/visitor appetite for future events.

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.

Our Top Actions

- 1 Continue to work with Belfast City Council on the development of a major city centre cultural and visitor attraction.
- 2 Sustain international residencies and showcasing opportunities to enhance the global reputation of artists from Northern Ireland.
- 3 Continue to support the delivery of the UK-wide Arts Infopoint pilot initiative, providing practical support and guidance for artists travelling to and from Northern Ireland.
- 4 Support and enhance international travel opportunities for local artists through partnership with the British Council and Four Nations group.

Lead

Demonstrating Impact

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.

The Arts Council's Strategic Development Department has lead responsibility for 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.

Our Top Actions

- 1 Develop an annual strategic research and development programme to demonstrate the role of the arts through research and evaluation with particular focus on COVID and environmental impacts.
- 2 Commission a light-touch evaluation of the current strategic framework to inform the development of the 2025–2030 strategy.
- 3 Grow public investment in the arts through working in partnership with DfC and providing the evidence base for the impact of the arts.
- 4 Build public and political support for a better resourced arts sector by engaging with decision makers at the Communities Committee and the Local Authorities, APG.
- 5 Develop a Communications Plan and an Advocacy Plan focusing on the value of the arts and monitor progress.
- 6 Continue to understand the living and working conditions of artists.

The Arts Council's Strategic Development Department has lead responsibility for 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.

Partnership Working

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.

In 2021–22, we worked with Derry City and Strabane District (DCSDC) Council on the Resilience Programme. A similar initiative with Belfast City Council has helped arts organisations undergo a process of change aimed at making them more effective and efficient; improving their resilience and investment readiness. We will continue to work with DCSDC in 2022–23 on the resilience programme and evaluate and share outcomes from this.

The Arts and 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 twelve projects being delivered under COVID restrictions. In 2021–22 we launched research and a case studies publication, capturing the voices of older people, artists and staff in care home settings during lockdown.

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.

Our Top Actions

- 1 Continue to work with our resource based organisations to support practitioners through networks and training/professional development.
- 2 Continue to work with Derry City and Strabane District Council to implement a resilience programme, which focusses on fostering collaborative practices between arts and cultural organisations.
- 3 Continue to work closely with Ulster University and Queens University Belfast to determine if there are opportunities for joint research projects in joint areas of interest.
- 4 Continue to build ongoing relations with a range of public and philanthropic funders to achieve broader societal outcomes; for example, the PHA and Baring Foundation on the Arts and Older People Programme.
- 5 Continue to report progress on the rural deliberative forum and minority ethnic deliberative forum until they complete by Q3 2022.

COVID Recovery

As we emerge from COVID-19 and its legacy, we will build on the continued partnership that we have had with the Department for Communities as a result of the pandemic. This is reflected in the new partnership agreement in planning, which will govern the relationship between the Department and the Arts Council.

The Arts Council endorses the published recommendations from the Cultural Recovery Taskforce report and will seek additional resources and new partnerships across government to bring the arts and culture sectors back to good health.

In 2021–22 we ran recovery programmes on behalf of the Department for Communities to:

- Support and help individuals reconnect or maintain their trade, profession or vocation within the creative sector as it emerges from COVID-19 restrictions;
- Support arts and cultural organisations across NI with the aim to reduce or remove operating deficits because of long periods of lockdown experienced by the sector.

We will continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on artists, creative practitioners and arts and cultural organisations to build an evidence base for further support as and when required.

Our Top Actions

- 1 Monitor the impacts of COVID recovery programmes.
- 2 Work with DfC on defining Arts Council role within the Ministerial task force recommendations and their implementation.
- 3 Input into the 10-year vision for culture, arts and heritage and 5-year strategy for arts for NI.
- 4 Continue to survey organisations and artists to gauge longer-term COVID impacts.

The Arts Council endorses the published recommendations from the Cultural Recovery Taskforce report and will seek additional resources and new partnerships across government to bring the arts and culture sectors back to good health.



MASS, by Conor Mitchell.
A co-production between The Belfast Ensemble, Outburst Arts and Ulster Orchestra, premiered at Outburst Queer Arts Festival 2021.
Image ©Neil Harrison

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.

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.

Given the increased importance for artists and the arts sector of digital platforms for the presentation and distribution of work, we will employ a digital officer to work in partnership with a cohort of arts organisations to take this forward.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Arts Council's priority has been to digitise as many processes and procedures as possible, in order to maintain business continuity and increase access to the arts.

The additional demands placed on the Arts Council website in 2021-22 simply exacerbated the problems associated with legacy software and outdated technology that currently surround the website. Arts Council will develop a new website and improve access to its services in 2022-23.



The Druthaib's Ball, Array Collective, Turner Prize exhibition, Herbert Gallery Coventry, 2021. Image: Garry Jones Photography

Digital Developments

Since the onset of the pandemic in 2020, the challenges of filling gaps in digital capacity and know-how within the NI arts sector have become apparent. The need to improve access to the arts online for marginalized groups, and the need to review and re-set the models of delivery for the arts in NI, are significant.

A digital development strategy for the arts in NI over the next three years is a strategic Arts Council objective. Developments in digital technology and digital arts content offer an opportunity to look at how we can achieve a strong and resilient arts sector that is fit for current and future challenges.

The Arts Council identified the digital ambitions¹⁴ of arts organisations in 2021 and will kick-start a Digital Mentoring Programme in 2022-23. The Arts Council will help support the growth of digital knowledge and skills within the arts sector. It will help arts organisations improve their e-marketing and use of social media; to convert live audiences to online audiences; to drive ecommerce and live streaming, to innovate with VR and new technologies, and create quality, engaging, digital arts content for all.

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. A website redevelopment project is in place and will be delivered in 2022.

Our Top Actions

- 1 Develop a Communications Plan and an Advocacy Plan focusing on the value of the arts and monitor progress.
- 2 Produce a Digital Development Strategy for the arts sector and improve the digital transition of Arts Council services to stakeholders.
- 3 Develop a new Arts Council website, compliant with current accessibility standards.

¹⁴ <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Digital-Ambitions-Survey-Findings-Report-October2021.pdf>

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 Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

The 'indicative' Exchequer budget figure (Resource) is £10,347,000 (2022-23), [2021-22: £10,197,000]. An increase of £150,000 was made for 'tails' (expenditure carried forward from 2021-22) and sundry inescapable pressures in the current year.

The Net Lottery income for the year is forecast at £9,948,000.

The 'indicative' Exchequer Capital budget is £499,000.

In the current economic climate, the Arts Council is constantly reviewing its overhead costs. The budget for 2022/23 is £671,958.

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 small items of equipment and minor works, health and safety equipment in response to COVID-19, musical instruments for bands, groups and individuals and the purchase of artwork for the collection which in turn will support artists.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Headline Achievements 2021–22

1. Introduction

Almost exactly two years after they were first introduced, the last remaining COVID-19 legal restrictions came to an end in Northern Ireland in March 2022. Following the government's successful vaccination programme in 2021–22, restrictions eased during the year and we welcomed the cautious reopening of arts venues and the return of live in-person performances and activities. The Arts Council funding programmes, publications and highlights listed below, reflect this transition and the exceptionally challenging circumstances in which artists and arts organisations nevertheless continued to create great art, connect with audiences, and provide both solace and inspiration.

2. Funding Programmes

Annual Funding Programme

May 2021

Arts Council awards annual funding of £13m to key arts organisations from Exchequer and National Lottery resources.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/ACNI-awards-13-million-in-core-grants>

Lottery Project Funding

July 2021

Arts Council awards Lottery Project funding of £1.9m to arts organisations to deliver high-quality arts projects across the region.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-awards-over-1.9m-of-national-lottery-funding>

Individual Artists Digital Evolution Awards Scheme

August 2021

The Arts Council, in collaboration with Future Screens NI, opens new funding programme which aims to provide individual artists from Northern Ireland with skills in the use of digital technology to support sustainability in the context of COVID-19. £85,688 is awarded in November to nine artists.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-opens-new-80000-individual-artists-digital-evolution-awards> (August)

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-85688-for-innovative-digital-arts-projects> (November)

Mentoring and Residency Programme for Minority Ethnic Artists

September 2021

Arts Council opens new pilot funding programme to support the work of minority ethnic artists and creative practitioners living in Northern Ireland. £107,000 is awarded in November to 27 minority ethnic artists.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-opens-first-mentoring-and-residency-programme-for-minority-eth> (September)

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-twenty-seven-new-awards-for-minority-ethnic-artists> (November)

Creative Individuals Recovery Programme

September 2021

Arts Council with funding from Department for Communities opens new recovery programme, co-designed to support individuals working in the arts and creative sectors. £2,711,816 is awarded in December to 1,433 individuals to support one-off costs associated with their arts practice and to build their professional and technical skills.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/5million-recovery-fund-to-support-individuals-in-the-arts-creative-sectors> (September)

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-2.7-million-recovery-funding-to-support-individuals> (December)

Musical Instruments for Bands Programme

September 2021

Arts Council, with capital investment from the Department for Communities, opens programme designed to help bands across Northern Ireland upgrade worn out instruments and purchase new ones. Twenty-four bands receive funding in November.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-opens-funding-scheme-to-help-bands-purchase-new-instruments> (September)

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-funding-for-24-bands-to-purchase-new-instruments> (November)

Arts & Older People Programme

September 2021

Arts Council awards £207,000 to enable 27 arts organisations across Northern Ireland to deliver a series of community-based arts projects benefitting older people.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-announces-207000-for-creative-projects-benefitring-older-people>

Health & Safety Capital Programme

October 2021

Arts Council, with funds from the Department for Communities, opens programme to support arts organisations to reopen their creative spaces safely. £749,226 awarded in January 2022 to 34 organisations.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/acni-announce-750000-health-safety-capital-programme-to-support-the-sector> (October)

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/acni-announces-health-and-safety-funding-to-support-arts-organisations> (January)

Four Nations International Fund

October 2021

Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Arts Council England, Arts Council Wales/Wales Arts International and Creative Scotland jointly pilot new fund to support individuals and organisations in developing international partnerships and co-creation projects across the four nations.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/uk-arts-councils-agencies-to-pilot-new-fund-for-international-collaboration>

Creative Schools Partnership

November 2021

Eleven post-primary schools in Belfast and Derry-Londonderry receive grants of up to £15,000 each to develop landmark arts projects over the next two years, through a cross-departmental fund backed by the Arts Council, the Executive's Urban Villages Initiative and the Education Authority.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/eleven-schools-receive-specialist-funding-to-develop-creative-projects>

COVID Recovery Programme for Arts Organisations

January 2022

Arts Council with funding from Department for Communities opens new recovery programme designed to reduce or remove organisations' operating deficits which have arisen in 2021–22 as a result of the pandemic. This new programme for arts organisations is part of DfC's wider COVID Recovery Programme, co-designed with seven sectoral bodies.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/covid-recovery-programme-opens-for-arts-organisations>

Creative Industries Seed Fund

January 2022

Arts Council in collaboration with Future Screens NI opens new funding programme which aims to develop partnerships that will use the arts within new and emerging digital, immersive technologies to expand the possibilities of how the arts can be distributed and utilised in new and innovate ways

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-opens-new-100000-creative-industries-seed-fund>

Organisations Digital Evolution Awards

January 2022

Arts Council opens new £40,000 funding programme to provide arts organisations from Northern Ireland with skills in the use of digital technology to create digital art.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-opens-new-40000-organisations-digital-evolution-awards>

Small Grants Programme

January 2022

Arts Council reopens the Small Grants 'rolling' programme, providing professional arts organisations and community groups with grants between £500–£10,000 to support projects in any art form, including music, drama, dance, literature, visual, and participatory arts.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-councils-national-lottery-small-grants-programme-reopens>

3. Publications

Evidencing Need

August 2021

Arts Council report, working with the Department for Communities and the ministerial Cultural Recovery Task Force group, collating evidence to demonstrate the impact of COVID-19, and making the case for an Arts & Culture Sectoral Survival Fund for Individual Artists.

http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/Evidencing_Need_Individuals.pdf

EU Withdrawal: Key Changes and Implications for Northern Ireland-based Arts Organisations

August 2021

Arts Council report setting out the key changes in legislation affecting creative workers and arts organisations travelling or trading with EU counterparts.

http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI_EU_Withdrawal.pdf

Freelance Practitioner Research Report

September 2021

Survey-based research identifying the development, creative and production needs of freelance artists from Northern Ireland's theatre and dance sectors.

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Freelance-Practitioner-Research-Report-Executive-Summary.pdf>

Stories from the Inside; Isolation, Loneliness, and the Arts, in Residential Care during the COVID-19 Pandemic

September 2021

Study commissioned by the Arts Council about the role of the arts in supporting the residential care sector as it begins the process of recovery and reopening after the pandemic.

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Stories-from-the-Inside-Final-Report-Executive-Summary.pdf>

Emergency Grant Programme: Survey of Individual Artists

September 2021

Findings from a dedicated survey (May 2021) of artists and creatives in receipt of grant support under the Arts Council's COVID-19 Emergency Support Programme, revealing the true impact of the pandemic on NI's creative sector.

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Emergency-Grant-Programme-Artists.pdf>

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Findings from a dedicated survey (May 2021) of arts and cultural organisations in receipt of grant support under the Arts Council's COVID-19 Emergency Support Programme, revealing the true impact of the pandemic on NI's creative sector.

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Emergency-Grant-Programme-Organisations.pdf>

Digital Ambitions Survey

October 2021

Arts Council publishes the findings of its survey (March/April 2021) on the online and digital ambitions of NI's arts and creative sector.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-survey-reveals-digital-ambitions-of-nis-creative-sector>

Bright Lights in a Dark Year: The Arts in Lockdown

December 2021

Arts Council publishes an account of the journey of NI's arts and cultural sectors through the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, from the first national lockdown in March 2020.

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Arts-in-Lockdown.pdf>

Arts Council Art Collection — Acquisitions 2020–21

February 2022

Publication of a catalogue of the latest acquisitions to the Collection, featuring new purchases which are available for exhibition both within and outside NI, as part of the Arts Council's Loan Scheme.

<http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Collection-Acquisitions-2020-2021.pdf>

Arts Council Youth Music Strategy and 5-year Action Plan

March 2022

Arts Council publishes its Strategy and 5-year Action Plan for the development of Youth Music in Northern Ireland. Accompanying reports include the set of strategic recommendations which fall beyond the scope of the Arts Council, and the comprehensive Youth Music Audit, commissioned by the Arts Council.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-publishes-youth-music-strategy-and-action-plan>

Arts & Older People Programme Evaluation

March 2022

Independent evaluation of Round V of the programme, covering the time period January–October 2021, during which 900 older people in care homes in Northern Ireland benefitted from arts interventions during the pandemic, which helped to alleviate isolation and loneliness, while promoting positive mental health and well-being.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/research-shows-900-older-people-in-ni-care-homes-benefitted-from-arts>

4. Highlights

Young Musicians in Afghanistan and NI 'Choose to Challenge' through Music

April

A social action programme building relations between young musicians in Northern Ireland and Afghan Women's Orchestra, facilitated by Beyond Skin and Afghanistan National Institute of Music, leads to a joint music video, focusing on the International Women's Day 2021 theme of 'Choose to Challenge', with the young musicians challenging a recent statement banning girls in Afghanistan from singing in school.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/young-women-in-afghanistan-ni-choose-to-challenge-through-music>

Earth Day marked by Environmental Arts Project by NI Artist

April

To highlight Earth Day, the National Lottery and the Arts Council showcase the work of NI artist, Robin Price, whose photographic project, 'Air of the Anthropocene', reveals environmental pollution in cities across the world, raising awareness of our growing pollution problem and creating open discussion for potential government-backed interventions.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/lottery-campaign-marks-earth-day-with-environmental-arts-project>

Curtain Up on £12.2m Grand Opera House Restoration

June

The Grand Opera House reopens following completion of its £12.2m restoration and development project, which saw the refurbishment of the auditorium, redesign of the foyer and bar, and upgrading of facilities and technical infrastructure.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/curtain-up-on-12.2-million-grand-opera-house-restoration>

Edinburgh Festival Fringe Showcases Theatre and Dance from NI to Global Industry Leaders

August

Ten major works, created by some of Northern Ireland's leading creators of theatre, dance makers and arts organisations, are showcased at Edinburgh Festival Fringe 'Connect', a new online event and networking platform for arts industry and Fringe artists.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/edinburgh-festival-fringe-connect-showcases-theatre-dance-from-ni-to-global>

Portrait of Northern Ireland Centenary Exhibition

August

'Portrait of Northern Ireland — Neither an Elegy nor a Manifesto', a major exhibition supported by the Northern Ireland Office as part of its Centenary programme, runs at Belfast's Golden Thread Gallery and showcases 100 pieces of art featuring the people and places that have defined NI over the past 100 years.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/portrait-of-northern-ireland-centenary-exhibition-announced>

Culture Night Belfast presents The Ogham Grove

September

Two spectacular monumental sculptures are built in Belfast city centre, by artist Gawain Morrison, creating a vast structural, lighting and sound installation that draws on themes from our ancestral heritage and culture on the island of Ireland.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/culture-night-belfast-presents-the-ogham-grove>

Lockdown Films Celebrate New Works by D/deaf, Neurodivergent and Disabled Artists

September

D/deaf, neurodivergent and disabled professional artists based in Northern Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland are commissioned to produce new film and audio works as part of BBC Arts' Culture in Quarantine initiative and broadcast on BBC i-Player.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/new-work-created-celebrated-in-lockdown-films>

Professional Development for Cultural Businesses

September

The Arts Council partners with Creative & Cultural Skills (C&CS) to provide a new training and professional development programme, with free expert advice and support to help a wider range of talent enter the creative workforce.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-partners-with-creative-cultural-skills-to-help-strengthen-work>

Creative Schools Partnership Programme

September

The Arts Council, the Education Authority and the Urban Villages Initiative come together to announce a two-year funding programme to promote creative learning in the classroom.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/new-cross-government-and-national-lottery-funding-will-boost-creative-learn>

Belfast International Arts Festival

October

The 59th Belfast International Arts Festival presents an imaginative and inspirational programme that seeks to positively contribute to the post-COVID social, economic and cultural revival of the city, and more widely its artistic communities and audiences.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/belfast-international-arts-festival-returns-centre-stage-this-autumn>

Arts Council and British Council Reaffirm Partnership Commitment

October

In the year marking the 10th anniversary of their partnership, the two organisations confirm their joint commitment up to 2024 to develop and showcase their work with agencies, festivals and residencies internationally, including those in India, Germany, Paris and other areas of Europe and the UK.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-council-and-the-british-council-reaffirm-commitment-to-showcasing-arts>

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council longlisted for UK City of Culture

October

The bid succeeds in reaching the longlist, with seven other cities in the running, for UK City of Culture 2025.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/uk-city-of-culture-2025-longlist-revealed>

Arts & Business NI opens 'Blueprint' Cultural Sustainability Programme

November

Arts & Business NI opens applications for a pioneering 5-year cultural sustainability programme, designed to enable small- to medium-sized cultural organisations in NI to take a longer-term approach to income generation.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/arts-business-ni-open-applications-for-blueprint-programme>

Culture, Arts and Heritage Recovery Taskforce Publishes Recommendations

November

The Arts Council endorses the Taskforce's recommendations seeking additional resources and new partnerships across government to bring the arts and culture sectors back to good health in post-COVID NI.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/Arts-Council-responds-to-Ministers-Taskforce-Report>

Ivor Novello-nominated Composer, Conor Mitchell, Premieres MASS

November

Outburst Arts and The Belfast Ensemble, in partnership with the Ulster Orchestra, present the premiere of MASS, a large-scale, symphonic audio-visual work, performed at the iconic Belfast Telegraph Building by 64 musicians from the Ulster Orchestra and six queer international filmmakers.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/premiere-of-mass-symphonic-audio-visual-work>

Arts Council Chair pays tribute to Resilient Sector

December

Representatives of the arts sector gather at The MAC in an event marking the launch of a new publication, 'Bright Lights in a Dark Year: The Arts in Lockdown', to hear the Arts Council Chair and Board Members pay tribute to the artists and arts organisations who have continued to produce new work for audiences during the pandemic.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/acni-chair-reflects-on-pandemic-and-pays-tribute-to-resilient-sector>

Array Collective wins 2021 Turner Prize

December

Belfast-based Array Collective become the first artists in Northern Ireland to win the world-renowned £25,000 Turner Prize, with their installation, The Druithaib's Ball.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/belfast-based-array-collective-win-2021-turner-prize>

Northern Ireland Opera wins London International Short Film Festival Awards

December

Northern Ireland Opera's enchanting cinematic experience, 'Old Friends and Other Days', is officially selected for the Belfast Film Festival and the Prague International Indie Short Film Festival; wins Best Short Feature and an Audience Award at the London International Short Film Festival; Best Music Film at the ONKYO Film Awards; and is nominated for The British Short Films Awards 2021.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/old-friends-and-other-days-a-film-by-northern-ireland-opera>

Future Screens NI announced as Arts Partner in DfC COVID Recovery Employment & Skills Initiative

January 2022

Future Screens NI - a collaborative partnership between Ulster University, Queen's University Belfast and local industry partners - lead on the 'Art Work' programme, allocating funds to arts sector organisations to recruit entry level roles which will support organisational and sectoral growth.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/future-screens-ni-announced-as-partner-in-dfc-covid-recovery-employment-ski>

Beyond Skin and The Duncairn host Concert for Musicians at Risk in Afghanistan

January

An evening of music featuring Afghan musician, Yusuf Mahmoud and his son Ariz, highlights the plight of refugees & musicians at risk in Afghanistan.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/beyond-skin-and-the-duncairn-host-concert-for-musicians-at-risk-in-afghanis>

Young Musicians Platform Award Performance

February 2022

The six current winners of the BBC NI and Arts Council Young Musicians Platform Award perform at the Ulster Hall alongside the Ulster Orchestra in a spectacular concert which is broadcast on BBC Radio Ulster's Classical Connections.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/young-musicians-land-leading-role-in-bbc-ulster-orchestra-concert>

Children's Writing Fellow for NI honoured by Duchess of Cambridge's CBeebies Bedtime Read

February 2022

The children's classic, 'The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark', written by Jill Tomlinson and illustrated by Paul Howard, the new Children's Writing Fellow for Northern Ireland, is chosen by Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Cambridge, as her CBeebies Bedtime Story to mark Children's Mental Health Week.

<http://artscouncil-ni.org/news/childrens-writing-fellow-for-ni-honoured-by-duchesses-of-cambridges-cbeebie>

Appendix 2

Resource Allocation

Table 1. 2022-23 Resource Allocation by Programme

Programme	Exchequer (£) Resource	Lottery (£)	Total (£)
Annual Funding	8,500,000	4,505,025	13,005,025
Arts & Older People		200,000	200,000
Cross Border Touring		200,000	200,000
Creative Schools		165,000	165,000
NI Screen		225,000	225,000
Project Funding		2,250,000	2,250,000
Public Art		50,000	50,000
Rural Arts		500,000	500,000
Small Grants		500,000	500,000
Commissioning		200,000	200,000
Support for Individual Artists (SIAP)	134,083	1,100,000	1,234,083
Young People & Wellbeing		200,000	200,000
Creative Industries		175,000	175,000
Staff costs	1,151,181	1,062,609	2,213,790
Overheads	379,842	350,000	729,842
Strategic Development	28,800		28,800
Safeguarding	28,104		28,104
Lottery: Other Operating Costs Direct		107,000	107,000
Tails from 2021/22 and sundry	150,000		150,000
Total Expenditure	10,372,010	11,789,634	22,161,644

Appendix 3

Programme Overview 2021-22

Table 1. Routine Programmes FY21-22

Programme	Fund	No.	Value of Awards (£)	Decision Date
Small Grants Programme	Lottery	3	19,261	March 2022 — Programme reopened for applications in January 2022
Annual Funding Programme	Lottery/ Exchequer	97	13,005,025	Interim decisions April 2021; full decisions May 2021
Lottery Project Funding	Lottery	87	1,909,495	July 2021
SIAP — Womex	Lottery	2	800	October 2021
SIAP — D/deaf and Disabled Artists Support Fund	Lottery	1	25,000	September 2021
Arts and Older People	Lottery	27	207,257	September 2021
Creative Schools	Lottery	11	163,050	November 2021
Musical Instruments for Bands	Exchequer	34	292,457	November 2021
Health & Safety Capital Programme	Exchequer	34	749,226	January 2022
Individual Artists Digital Evolution Programme	Lottery	9	85,688	January 2021
Minority Ethnic Artists Mentoring & Residency Programme	Lottery	27	107,315	November 2021
Arts Development Fund	Lottery/ Exchequer	10	196,490	Various
Grand Total		342	16,761,064	

Table 2. Recovery Programmes

Programme	Fund	No.	Value of Awards (£)	Decision Date
Creative Individuals Recovery Programme	Exchequer	1,422	2,692,803	October 2021
COVID Recovery Programme for Arts Organisations	Exchequer	38	1,714,025	January 2022
Grand Total		1,460	4,406,828	

Table 3. Other Funding

Programme	Fund	No.	Value of Awards (£)	Decision Date
DfC Additional Resources	Exchequer	1	105,000	September 2021
DfC Monitoring Round	Exchequer	11	515,639	Various
Grand Total		12	620,639	

Appendix 4

Performance Measurement

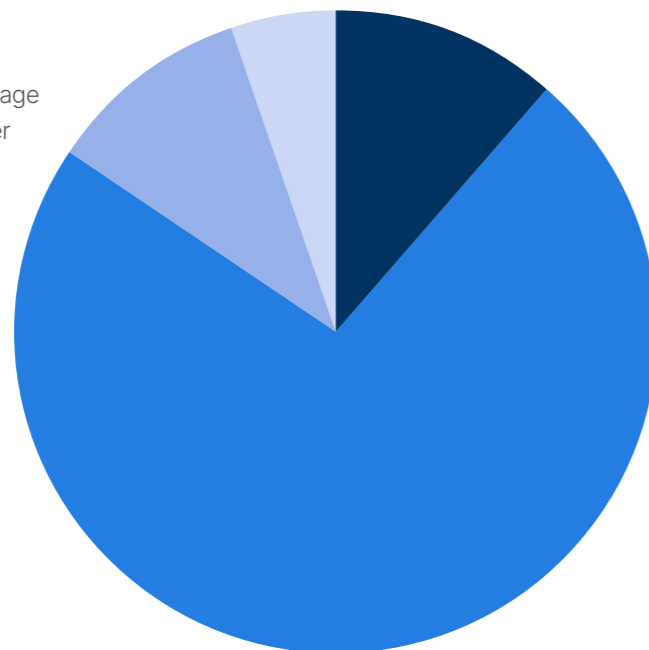
Our Progress in FY21-22

In FY2021-22 we had 25 dedicated business plan actions that were monitored quarterly. At the end of FY21-22 the progress was as follows:

Status	Q4 Progress (RAG)
Completed	3
On target / ongoing	19
Planning / scoping stage	2
No action this quarter	1
Grand Total	25

Summary of Progress

- Completed
- On target / Ongoing
- Planning / Scoping Stage
- No Action this Quarter



Our Progress against Strategic Framework

FY21-22 was a mid-point in our five year strategic framework (2019-24). The table below quantifies progress against actions specified in the original plan using the RAG status.

Connect	Progress (RAG)
Amber	3
Green	4
Red	1
Grand Total	8

Inspire	Progress (RAG)
Amber	4
Green	3
Red	0
Grand Total	7

Lead	Progress (RAG)
Amber	3
Green	4
Red	1
Grand Total	8

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