

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

2024-2034 Strategy Consultation Responses

*Summary of responses received from
individuals and organisations.*

April 2024



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ACNI Director of Strategic Development overview:

Once again, we would like to express our gratitude to everyone who took the time to contribute to the public consultation process. This was important for us, at the final stages of strategy development to ensure that the strategy outcomes are robust.

We are pleased that a significant majority of responses supported both the EQIA and the strategy mission, vision, values, and outcomes. However, we have carefully analysed and discussed every response and have strived to enhance the document further as well as consider many comments in relation to our three-year business plan, which sets out the priority actions in the first three years of the 10-year plan.

We hope that this engagement will continue as we progress achieving our strategic goals.

1 Summary of Findings

By the 5th of April closing date, 162 responses had been received via the on-line survey and a further 9 stand-alone written submissions were received on behalf of organisations, arts organisations, public bodies, private sector, and the public (171 total).

Survey responses were broadly representative of partner and stakeholder groups ACNI was seeking to engage through this process.

Three quarters of responses came from three categories: artists (30%), arts and arts resource organisation (28%) and member of the public, currently engaged in the arts (20%)

Overall, 92% of respondents felt the final draft strategy would have no adverse or negative impacts on one or more of the Section 75 groups.

The two categories most likely to be identified as the group most likely to be impacted negatively was age (16%) followed by disability (12%) and political opinion (9%). However, this equates to <20 responses.

89% of respondents either agreed or agreed strongly with the draft strategies mission, vision, and values.

Most comments showed support for the mission, vision, and values. One theme that stood out was the important role of ACNI in relation to advocacy and championing the arts.

Based on all responses received to the set of questions based on the proposed six outcomes, 89% of respondents either agreed or agreed strongly with them.

There was strong support for all six draft outcomes, with % agreement ranging between 85% and 92%¹.

When we asked respondents to select the three most important outcomes outcome 1 (a more financially stable sector) and outcome 6 (a sector that is more valued across society and government) were most likely to be cited in the top three with outcome 1 cited by 82% of people and outcome 6 by 61% of people.

Only a small proportion of respondents disagreed or disagreed strongly with the draft outcomes. This proportion ranged between 3% and 7% across all outcome areas.

72 responses show support for the outcomes, 6 responses oppose them, 4 responses are categorized as indifferent.

The terms arts and artists were used 370 times. But the rest of the most common used terms show much more variety: Sector (116 mentions), Rural (81 mentions), Funding (81 mentions), Work (77 mentions), and Support (71 mentions)

A summary of the main themes can be found on page 14-17 with our response.

¹ This analysis is based on those who answered and said 'agree' or 'strongly agree'

2 Introduction

This document presents headline findings from Arts Council of Northern Ireland’s consultation on its [draft 2024-2034 strategy \(opens in a new window\)](#), which ran for 12 weeks between 12th January and 5th April 2024.

After completing a screening report on the strategy, a decision was taken to complete an [Equality Impact Assessment \(EQIA\) \(opens in a new window\)](#)² on the draft strategy and given its significance in terms of defining the organisations long-term strategy direction it was considered important to gauge wider public perceptions towards the strategy, with an explicit emphasis on its impact on Section 75 groups.

The purpose of the consultation was to:

- Obtain views on any potential negative impact relative to each of the Section 75 groups.
- Elicit views on any actions respondents felt could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impact, if identified.
- Gauge broader reaction to the strategy in terms of the proposed outcomes and mission, vision and values articulated.

By the 5th of April closing date, 162 responses had been received via the on-line survey and a further 8 stand-alone written submissions were received on behalf of individual organisations.

On-line survey questions are shown in Appendix 1.

The draft strategy was developed based on extensive face-to-face engagement with arts organisations, artists, government departments, local authorities and community and voluntary sectors. This process, which was co-facilitated with support from an independent service provider³, was reported and used to develop the strategy. The report can be found here⁴.

ACNI will review the findings of this public consultation to determine any possible adverse impacts on the Section 75 groups as well as any common themes that impact the outcomes, and will make changes, where appropriate, to mitigate or reduce negative impact as well as strengthen the outcomes and priorities.

2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is the process used to identify impacts resulting from the implementation of a policy on the nine Section 75 Equality Groups (appendix groups).

³ Ruth Flood Associates

⁴ Summary report from engaging with 262 people across 24 sessions <https://artscouncil-ni.org/resources/strategy-feedback-summary>

3 Survey findings

3.1 Consultation responses

Q: In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

Respondent Type	n	%
An artist	49	30.2%
On behalf of an arts organisation	41	25.3%
As a member of public who does currently engage in the arts	33	20.4%
Other (please specify below)	13	8.0%
On behalf of a local authority	6	3.7%
As a member of the public who doesn't currently engage in the arts	6	3.7%
Not Answered	5	3.1%
Resource organisation on behalf of its members	4	2.5%
Private sector / business	3	1.9%
On behalf of a government body	2	1.2%
Total	162	100.0%

Other:

- Social Enterprise Autism Community Programme
- Private funder
- On behalf of a community group
- On behalf of a GAA Club
- Healthy Living Centre
- Charity Beneficiary
- Art therapist in private practice
- I currently engage with the arts in a number of capacities including a practitioner and a member of the public who currently engaged in the arts.
- On behalf of Equity Trade Union
- Rural Community Network NI
- As an advocate for the development of dance education and training
- On behalf of the Musicians' Union - the trade union for musicians across the UK
- Amateur drama group in a border area

- Survey responses were broadly representative of partner and stakeholder groups ACNI was seeking to engage through this process.
- Three quarters of responses came from three categories: artists (30%), arts and arts resource organisation (28%) and member of the public, currently engaged in the arts (20%)
- A further 8% of responses came from organisations and individuals not classified in the response options. This included: community and voluntary sector organisations, sports organisations, arts therapists, trade unions and amateur theatre/drama groups.
- Nearly 50% of respondents identified as women (49%) followed by 33% identifying as men. 1% of respondents were non-binary. Nearly 15% preferred not to say or did not answer.
- The largest proportion of respondents fell within the age range 45-54 (24%). 8% did not answer or preferred not to say.
- 14% of respondents described themselves as disabled, D/deaf, or neurodivergent. 19.8% preferred not to say or did not answer.
- Of those who responded to the ethnicity question – almost 89% described themselves as white and almost 3.1% described themselves in another way. 8% preferred not to say or did not answer.
- Of those who responded to the sexual orientation question – 72.2% described themselves as heterosexual/straight and 12.3% as LGBTQIA+. 15.4% preferred not to say or did not answer. 15.4% preferred not to say or did not answer.

3.2 Adverse impacts on Section 75 groups

Q: Do you feel the final strategy will have any adverse or negative impacts on one or more of the Section 75 groups that have not already been identified?⁵

Response Options	N	%
Yes	86	7.9%
No	1,009	92.1%
Total	1,095	100%

Don't Know n=269

Q: Do you feel the final draft strategy will have any adverse or negative impacts on one or more of the Section 75 groups, that have not already been identified?

Section 75 Group	Response options	N	%
Religious belief	Yes	6	4.76%
	No	120	95.24%
Political opinion	Yes	11	8.80%
	No	114	91.20%
Racial group	Yes	7	5.83%
	No	113	94.17%
Age	Yes	19	15.83%
	No	101	84.17%
Marital status	Yes	4	3.33%
	No	116	96.67%
Sexual orientation	Yes	7	5.83%
	No	113	94.17%
Gender	Yes	7	5.69%
	No	116	94.31%
Disability, D/deaf and neurodivergent	Yes	15	12.20%
	No	108	87.80%
Dependents	Yes	10	8.47%
	No	108	91.53%

Excludes Don't Know's

- Overall, 92% of respondents felt the final draft strategy would have no adverse or negative impacts on one or more of the Section 75 groups.
- Age was identified as the group most likely to be impacted negatively (16%) followed by disability (12%) and political opinion (9%) – however this equates to <20 responses.

⁵ This question sums the nine protected equality characteristics to determine support across all of them (excluding do not know)

Q: Do you feel the final draft strategy will have any adverse or negative impact on one or more of the Section 75 groups? What action you think should be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts on the group identified.

n=28 (11 artists, 6 members of the public, 3 arts organisations, 8 others).

- a. Three of the most common words used were people (23), artists (22) and arts (21). Funding was mentioned 20 times.
- b. The discussion is centred around the impact of the strategy mainly on artists. It also focuses on funding mechanisms, and the role of specific organizations within the broader geographic context of Northern Ireland. 23 of the responses are characterised as having a positive view on how the strategy will impact on Section 75 groups. 5 were neutral or negative.
- c. No major concerns about the strategy impacting negatively the S75 groups. Although age is mentioned a few times – this is consistent with the quantitative responses. 2 people mentioned that older people may be affected by this strategy (by “restrictive funding”). In other questions, one person mentioned more focus on older people was needed. However, another person expressed concerns that the emphasis on children/young people had lost prominence and that more support for emerging artists was needed.
- d. Concerns by a few people about the use of inclusive language in the Strategy, diversity as a tick box exercise. Concerns that this affects who gets funding. A few people think there is a trade-off between merit and inclusivity.
- e. Conflicting views about key issues, but these were expressed by only a few people: Why not mention the work with the Republic of Ireland. One person recommended not emphasizing integration (where are the spaces for people with those views?). Another thinks that more should be done around sectarianism, paramilitarism, etc.
- f. Concerns about regional distribution (a few people mentioning rurality, one person mentioned disparity in DCSDC, a local authority urged ACNI to ensure that all districts within the region are included in this vision).
- g. Some concerns about large arts organisations preventing artists and small organisations from getting funding.
- h. One person mentioned neurodivergent people, in particular women, are affected negatively by restrictive funding.
- i. Rural/place is not included in Section 75. One person encouraged ACNI to continue doing the work they do with rural communities/artists. Needed: Further analysis of the access challenges of S75 groups in rural areas who must cope with additional barriers of distance from provision and poor public transport.

3.3 Strategy content

Q: To what extent do you agree with the mission, vision, and values?

	Responses	Percent
Strongly agree	87	54.7%
Agree	55	34.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	8	5.0%
Disagree	6	3.8%
Strongly disagree	3	1.9%
Total	159	100.0%

Excludes Don't Know n=3

Q: Do you have any further comments about the mission, vision, and values?

n=70 (21 artists, 17 arts organisations, 10 members of the public, 7 local authority/government body, 15 Other).

- The words arts and artists are used 137 times. People is used 23 times; Support 21.
- 55 responses show support for the mission, vision, and values. 4 responses do not show support. 11 are indifferent, indicating a balance of sentiments within the response or a lack of clear feeling or views about it.
- If there is one emerging theme is the request for ACNI to do more advocacy.
- A few people were concerned that the mission/vision is focused on society. It should be art for art's sake. Concerns that in general people are not as diverse/open as artists are. So, if artists pursue political agendas, it can create problems with audiences. There are a few people who have mentioned this in different ways.
- Some people feel climate should be in the mission, some think that the arts have a negligible impact on climate.
- Supportive of the values. The challenge is demonstrating that they are being followed. This would require better communication.

Q: To what extent do you agree with the outcomes (all responses)⁶

	Responses	Percent
Strongly agree	631	66.7%
Agree	214	22.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	57	6.0%
Disagree	28	3.0%
Strongly disagree	16	1.7%
Total	946	100.0%

Not answered n=26

⁶ This question sums the six outcomes responses to determine support across all of them (excluding don't know)

Q: To what extent do you agree with the outcomes (by Section 75 group)

Strategy Outcome	Response category	Count	Column N %
Outcome 1: A more financially stable arts sector	Strongly agree	114	72.2%
	Agree	31	19.6%
	Neither agree nor disagree	8	5.1%
	Disagree	4	2.5%
	Strongly disagree	1	0.6%
Outcome 2: A sector that develops, looks after its people and is more inclusive	Strongly agree	107	68.2%
	Agree	36	22.9%
	Neither agree nor disagree	8	5.1%
	Disagree	4	2.5%
	Strongly disagree	2	1.3%
Outcome 3: A sector that is better supported to develop through experimentation and innovation	Strongly agree	89	56.7%
	Agree	46	29.3%
	Neither agree nor disagree	14	8.9%
	Disagree	5	3.2%
	Strongly disagree	3	1.9%
Outcome 4: A sector that contributes to social and economic benefits, and cares about the environment.	Strongly agree	93	58.9%
	Agree	41	25.9%
	Neither agree nor disagree	13	8.2%
	Disagree	6	3.8%
	Strongly disagree	5	3.2%
Outcome 5: More people from all backgrounds can enjoy arts experiences	Strongly agree	112	71.3%
	Agree	31	19.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	6	3.8%
	Disagree	5	3.2%
	Strongly disagree	3	1.9%
Outcome 6: A sector that is more valued across society and government	Strongly agree	116	73.0%
	Agree	29	18.2%
	Neither agree nor disagree	8	5.0%
	Disagree	4	2.5%
	Strongly disagree	2	1.3%

Q: Do you have any further comments about outcomes and actions?

n=82 (20 artists, 19 arts organisations, 18 members of the public, 8 local authority/government body, 17 Other/Not answered)

- a. This section provided the most detailed answers or contributions. The terms arts and artists were used 370 times. But the rest of the most common used terms show much more variety Sector (116 mentions), Rural (81 mentions), Funding (81 mentions), Work (77 mentions), and Support (71 mentions).
- b. 72 responses show support for the outcomes, 6 responses oppose them, 4 responses are categorized as indifferent.
- c. This distribution suggests that there is a level of support for the outcomes among the respondents, with a minority expressing opposition. A significant number of responses were complex, containing mixed sentiments or not clearly indicating a straightforward stance. These themes suggest a robust engagement with how outcomes and actions are envisioned to impact the arts sector, with a notable emphasis on the geographical (rural areas), financial (funding), and operational (support, work by artists and councils) aspects.
- d. Some queries on what outcomes mean. Do ACNI want artists to be outcomes based, does it require further resources to do so? Artists don't have the resources to accomplish this. This outcomes-based approach benefits larger organisations. It also affects ability to innovate if dictated to focus on outcomes.
- e. Can ACNI do more to connect audiences to arts organisations? Audience development is a great aspiration, but the sector is not equipped to do it.
- f. Emphasis on experimentation and innovation / at what cost? Who can afford to experiment and innovate? Large organisations. OK to promote this if this doesn't affect smaller, grass roots organisations.
- g. General concern about whether ACNI can deliver these outcomes? Not clear how ACNI will deliver it. Need for a clearer set of activities. The infrastructure and political climate in NI are not on ACNI's side to accomplish any of this.
- h. One person perceived that the strategy does not include arts education or sustainable careers within NI.
- i. Two people expressed concerns about fair pay. The strategy does not seek to address this directly. It should mention that ACNI values the right of artists and arts organisations to protest and dissent.
- j. What do we mean by creativity/innovation and advocacy. Ensure that when we describe "investment" is in terms of "strategic investment".

- 89% of respondents either agreed or agreed strongly with the draft strategies mission, vision, and values.
- Most comments showed support for the mission, vision, and values. 4 responses did not show support. If there is one emerging theme is the role of ACNI and advocacy.
- There was strong support for all six draft outcomes, with % agreement ranging between 83% and 90%.
- When we asked respondents to select the three most important outcomes outcome 1 (a more financially stable sector) and outcome 6 (a sector that is more valued across society and government) were most likely to be cited in the top three with outcome 1 cited by 82% of people and outcome 6 by 61% of people.
- Only a small proportion of respondents disagreed or disagreed strongly with the draft outcomes. This proportion ranged between 3% and 7%.
- Based on all responses received to the set of questions based on the proposed six outcomes, 89% of respondents either agreed or agreed strongly with them.
- 72 responses to the open response showed support for the outcomes, 6 responses oppose them, 4 response is categorized as indifferent.
- The terms arts and artists were used 231 times in open responses. Other common terms

Q: What would you view as the **3 most important** themes associated with the draft final ten-year strategy?⁷

Outcomes	N	N %
Objective 1 - A more financially stable arts sector	128	82%
Outcome 6 - A sector that is more valued across society and government	96	49%
Outcome 2 - A sector that develops, looks after its people and is more inclusive	77	28%
Outcome 5 - More people from all backgrounds can enjoy arts experiences	75	36%
Outcome 4 - A sector that contributes to social and economic benefits, and cares about the environment	57	48%
Outcome 3 - A sector that is better supported to develop through experimentation and innovation	44	61%

⁷ This analysis represents the % of people who selected the outcome in their top three most important themes

4 Conclusions / ACNI response

We are delighted with the positive response across all elements of the strategy, however, have taken extra measures to review any common issues raised across the open text boxes. Many issues are consistent with what we have found in the pre-engagement sessions. We have captured the main issues below and responded accordingly. The strategy has been refined to reflect some of the issues below. We are hopeful that the three-year business plan and monitoring tool read alongside the strategy will bring clarity to ACNI's proposed delivery in the first three years.

	Issues raised	Response
INVESTMENT AND RESOURCES	Financial stability was the most important outcome for people who responded many noting that ACNI cannot achieve the outcomes alone and without further investment and resources.	We have acknowledged the lack of government investment in arts over the last decade in the strategic context section and have designed the strategy to be agile and dependent on resources - i.e. if we receive the investment we need, then we can achieve more within the outcomes and earlier. However, if we do not, we will only be able to achieve a fraction of what is possible. We will continue to advocate for further resources for ACNI and the sector to maximise the impact we know we can have . Some areas noted were succession planning, fundraising, audience development.
ACTION AND MEASURING SUCCESS	Overwhelming support for the strategy but noting the importance of actions to deliver within the current resources	Three-year business plans to detail priority actions to achieve outcomes. This is supported by performance metrics and a reporting tool that will be reported quarterly to our Board, biannually to DfC and an annual performance review will be published. The strategy performance metrics were published as part of the consultation and can be found here: https://artscouncil-ni.s3-assets.com/acni-performance-monitoring-tool.pdf
REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION	The need for arts investment outside of urban centres (e.g. Belfast and Derry) and acknowledging the wide-ranging communities that benefit from that	We have strengthened the strategy document throughout to include our focus on activities in rural areas . The actions to deliver this will be in our business plans and will include - making the case for dedicated rural programmes , integrating the importance of rural activity throughout existing programmes and promoting rural arts activity. Our programmes will always be open to across the region, and we will actively target underrepresented areas and encourage applications as well as encourage those that we invest in to deliver beyond urban centres.

<p>INNOVATION</p>	<p>Mixed interpretation of outcome three and what we mean by innovation, experimentation and risk taking and what that means for artists and arts organisations who apply for investment</p>	<p>Pg 17 in the strategy document details the definition we will use to define experimentation and innovation and notes that it is encouraged in processes and methodologies as well as products and outputs. This does not solely mean immersive and digital technologies (currently <1% of ACNI (NL) investment). We will ensure all our open programmes are clear on how we define this and what it will mean for applicants</p>
<p>EDI</p>	<p>Concern that EDI can be viewed as 'box ticking' exercise and perception that funding is allocated to groups with certain characteristics and the view that merit and quality should always be the focus of ACNI. However people did welcome more focus on social class/socio economic background</p>	<p>ACNI has a legal duty to capture and report on equality data in relation to protected groups. This helps us monitor who we support and where the gaps are. Equality characteristics are currently not considered as part of the assessment criteria and are held anonymously on a separate database. We do not intend on introducing this as we do not feel that is the most effective way to tackle inequality and underrepresentation. However, the data can support our efforts in targeting underrepresented groups and engage directly with them to support more accessible processes as well as promote their work. We are committed to leading the way in terms of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and supporting the sector to be inclusive.</p>
<p>ADVOCACY</p>	<p>A common theme throughout the responses was the importance of advocacy and ACNI role in advocating on behalf of the sector - welcoming championing and advocacy in the vision and mission and the dedicated outcome on value. There was a wide range of views / perceptions of what the role of ACNI was in relation to advocacy and how we communicate that. We also welcome the partnerships offered in a range of responses - acknowledging that this is a joint responsibility</p>	<p>Arts Council NI is a regional public body (sponsor Dept DfC) and has a statutory duty to 'develop and improve the knowledge, appreciation, and practice of the arts' and 'advise the Department and other government departments, district councils and other bodies on matters relating to the arts'. This includes publishing, disseminating information relating to the arts and conducting research. The purposes of those functions enable ACNI to encourage and assist the coordination and efficient use of resources for the arts. The Arts Council is not a lobby group/sector representative body and advocates by working with statutory partners to demonstrate the impacts of arts, across NI. We support the sector with key messages and advice in relation to advocacy. We will add a page in the strategy detailing our role and linking to supporting documentation.</p>

<p>IMPACT ACROSS GOVERNMENT</p>	<p>We welcome the range of responses noting the importance of the role of arts across an expansive range of areas - regeneration, place/belonging, community cohesion, health and wellbeing, education/development, tourism, the economy, job creation, infrastructure, and public transport</p>	<p>We thank everyone for their responses detailing the role of arts on a range of areas which is consistent with our research and insights that we have presented to a range of stakeholders. However, our main strategic focus will be supporting artists, arts organisations which will then in turn benefit local communities across NI. We will work closely with DfC on their CAH strategy to work with other government departments to support these other areas that impact arts and creative industries. We are a small organisation with under <£10m government resources and 40-50 staff so it is vital we use resources across public services and beyond to ensure arts can fulfil its potential.</p>
<p>COMMUNITIES</p>	<p>We note the mixed responses in relation to arts supporting societal impacts and the need to focus on artists/organisations for their development. Some responses mentioned the importance of voluntary sector/volunteers and the value of participation to inspire and encourage people to create.</p>	<p>ACNI strategic focus will remain developing artists and arts organisations as per our statutory duties, however, our investment must also represent value for money to the taxpayer and the public. We know how impactful the arts sector is and that it represents excellent value for money and will continue to demonstrate that through robust insights.</p>
<p>QUALITY AND EXCELLENCE</p>	<p>This was a debated theme with mixed responses in relation to ACNI role in 'high quality' 'world class' arts. Terms like 'excellence' received mixed response. Some noting that more focus on high quality work of excellence while others hesitant to use those terms as they can be perceived as 'elitist'</p>	<p>We have noted in our strategy that we support and develop high-quality arts activity but have kept our outcomes high level. Our open programmes will be clear in the standards and experience required for investment as well as ensuring inclusivity across a range of artistic backgrounds, disciplines, and locations. We also know that participation and exposure/access to arts is a key driver/pathway to creative careers.</p>
<p>ARTIST FAIR PAY AND CONDITIONS</p>	<p>Some comments noted the role of ACNI in encouraging good practice in the sector and ensuring organisations pay fairly and appropriately</p>	<p>We have noted in our principles that we believe in fair remuneration for artists and ensured we have a focused outcome on workforce development and inclusivity. We will publish pay rates guidance, linking to art form related unions and ensure within our letters of offer that it is clear our expectations are that artists are paid fairly. We do not have regulatory powers to enforce this but will be working closely with the Creative Industries standards body and ensure NI is represented there. We will continue to monitor and assess artist pay and conditions to inform our advocacy of further support.</p>

<p>INTER-REGIONAL COLLABORATION</p>	<p>There were some comments about our role collaborating across the Republic of Ireland and the UK and how we intend on doing this within the new strategy</p>	<p>We have stated the importance of collaboration and partnership in our principles as it is essential to what we do and delivering against the outcomes. We regularly partner with Arts Councils across the UK, Ireland and beyond. Specific partnership actions and projects will be detailed in our three-year business plan.</p>
<p>OUTCOMES AND PROPORTIONALITY</p>	<p>There were some queries about what outcomes mean in practice for artists, freelancers and smaller organisations and the perception that larger organisations will have more alignment with the outcomes</p>	<p>The first three-year business plan details a review of our funding processes end-to-end to help develop a multi annual programme and one National Lottery programme. It has been clear throughout the strategy engagement process that we must ensure proportionality and ensure it is not 'one size fits all' - this will be reflected by the level of awards and type of programme.</p>
<p>CLIMATE</p>	<p>We note the mixed responses in relation to the role of the arts sector in mitigating the climate emergency we now face. Many comments acknowledged this was a role beyond ACNI/artists/organisations but that the focus on communicating impacts was the right one.</p>	<p>We note that the climate emergency is a global challenge for governments and Departments across the world. We understand the concern from the sector to do anything practical without further investment (including capital investment) to do so but welcome the responses on the role of the arts in communicating impacts. This is a theme we will be closely reviewing and supporting throughout the 10-year period.</p>

Appendix 1 – Selection of comments⁸

EQIA – some comments

Stop focusing on young artists 25 and under. Many artists/performers are in their 40s and feel excluded.

We note that a previous focus on children and young people has lost prominence in the strategy. If funding/focus is directed away from this group they could be negatively impacted, however we welcome the provision of a Young People's version of the strategy.

Selection of work should be based on merit regardless of background... I feel we get selected because we tick boxes rather than the appreciation of the work we make.

No action. Keep welcoming people from all walks of life and the problem sorts by itself.

Take steps to look for the participation of disabled people as artists and arts practitioners. Offer them help in participating in their passions, especially if it keeps them active and leads to less isolation and even advances their progress in life.

Place remains the great driver of inequity here.... we have found ACNI to run strongly counter to that pattern. And not just via your Rural Engagement programme. That is rare, courageous, and greatly appreciated.

We welcome the section included in the EQIA on rural proofing. The table included analysing the breakdown of awards to arts organisations and individual artists by Local Authority area is welcome but would have been enhanced by including a breakdown of spend by ACNI in Local Authority areas.

First hand socioeconomic and disability understanding is needed to be able to successfully allow access to the arts. There needs to be an active investigation into what exactly people from lower socioeconomic and disabled backgrounds need in order to be able to participate in the arts and/or as artists. There are so many hurdles that are not understood about access to the arts unless the person providing the access fully understands the struggles first hand therefore it's so important to collect data which provides those insights.

⁸ Some quotes have been selected under each open text question and responses to articulate some of the issues raised

Vision, Mission, Values

Could not agree more. It connects people across language and place and, in many forms, has contributed more than people of the public realise.

The organisation should be highly visible and accountable to everyone in society. Everyone benefits from the arts and from a society where cultural and arts opportunities are available to all.

There's not enough investment compared to our counterparts in the Republic of Ireland and we're losing artists as a result

The organisations which the Arts Council funds should also sign up to the mission, vision and values.

Inclusion - Socio-economic background should be given more importance in all aspects of the strategy

We very much in support of the vision, mission and values in the draft strategy and welcome the recognition of the need to work collaboratively and forge partnerships to break down barriers, and ensure that the arts are integrated into every aspect of our community. We particularly welcome the reference to the importance of the arts integration into healthcare.

Good to see investment and advocacy given same importance and weighting in the mission statement - it has felt that for a long time advocacy has been lacking (or perhaps conducted in private and not transparent); although a noticeable improvement of advocacy and engagement with DfC and others in the last 2-3 years.

All very admirable; they must be lived values in practice.

Mission statement is wide ranging and the actual strategy must encompass actions which might realise objectives inherent in mission statement....

The Mission, vision and values of the ACNI,s strategy are undermined by the lack of clarity in how they can be achieved without addressing Regional imbalance.

The key elements of the mission, vision and values are clearly articulated. They are open and positively expressed. The role (how) and reasons (why) the arts should play a role in economic development is less clear.

I'd love to see something around innovation

A stronger focus on artistic endeavour - art for arts sake, for the social benefit of beauty/excellence/inspiration would be good to include.

We welcome ACNI's Mission, Vision and Values. It is vital that the value of the arts are recognised as a catalyst for improving well-being and addressing areas of social need e.g. isolation, social inclusion, diversity, good relations etc. Collectively we need to advocate for the value of the arts and for investment in this area.

As long as there is more inclusion for smaller companies and not just funding for the usual big whigs, transparency and acceptance.

The attainment of that long term vision is best achieved through advocacy and collaboration with the Executive and policy makers. The four values referenced in terms of expertise, inclusion, collaboration, and integrity are a solid basis to support the vision within the Strategy which is to achieve 'A society where all people can experience a thriving arts sector that is recognised as essential to creativity, wellbeing and economic prosperity'.

Outcomes

Arts organisations are unable to reach their full potential due to weak core infrastructure and a lack of capacity and resources. This weak core infrastructure is a result of compounded cuts/standstill funding and one year funding agreements that inhibit long term planning and strategic fundraising.

More information on how ACNI would lobby Ministers and Departments, MPs and consider complimentary income streams e.g. Lottery would be helpful.

We would like to stress that there needs to be a focused partnership approach with ACNI for the development of Arts within Northern Ireland, particularly in rural areas which have been deeply impacted by COVID.

Whilst undoubtedly the evolution of technology will bring positive benefits for the arts and wider society, there are many in the cultural sector who have well placed concerns and fears about its misuse and impacts, which we acknowledge you mention in the strategy...however...many artists and arts organisations also have wider concerns of the reductive definition of 'innovation' that is dominated by an over-emphasis of technology advancement.

We note that the ACNI draft strategy does not mention the issue of regional imbalance at all. Given that the issue is recognised on the draft strategy of the government department with responsibility for ACNI as an arm's length body we would expect that the issue would be acknowledged at a high level in ACNI's strategy , along with actions to address it.

We welcome to inclusion of 'participation' in outcome 5, priority 8 of the final draft strategy...Active participation is an effective gateway to a career in the creative industries and is the entry point for many professionals embarking on their careers

Actions on climate change needs to address how the sector operates as well as the art that it produces. Often we are prevented in taking action as green options tend to be more expensive eg recycled paper for flyers and posters can be prohibitively expensive. Grants could be given to address these price disparities allowing us to choose the greener option.

Arts impact upon climate change is negligible, and spending any time or resources trying to make art 'green' is a complete waste. ACNI should support artists whose work clearly communicates that the real culprits of climate change ... stop wasting time asking artists to make their practices more 'climate friendly.' Doing so is the definition of 'virtue signalling.'

We (as artists) need to know the ask - what will the Arts Council do and what do they want us to do? Where are the impact metrics? What will we have achieved in ten years? It's hard to have trust in the document without that. Deliver the Deliberative Forum for Freelancers

While I strongly agree or agree with these outcomes, I don't believe the ACNI will achieve these. Not entirely it's fault, more to do with a lack of political will in this society to make these achievable, 1 main reason being lack of any infrastructure enabling wider participation or delivery

We welcome the Outcomes based approach, and that this approach recognises that Outcomes need to reflect the arts sector and society separately whilst acknowledging the crucial overlap.

I would be wary of prioritising risk taking and innovation over allowing artists and organisations to make the most of work that they have already created - tried and tested work that has had considerable financial and human investment and audience development should be as valuable to society as constantly striving for new work and new innovations. Both are important.

the value of process should be considered here. The quality of a process should be considered as an outcome in and of itself.

this should not be left to small and mid-scale companies to develop their own audiences, ACNI could do more to connect audiences with companies, and support marketing and audience development rather than individuals and companies replicating the work with ACNI funding.

Appendix 2 – strategy consultation survey questions

Overview

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is consulting on its new ten-year strategy (2024 to 2034).

The proposals are geared towards the development of a clearly defined role for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) over the next 10 years.

We are seeking your views on:

1. Your broad views/opinions on what is proposed.
2. The Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) of the draft strategy on Section 75 groups.

ACNI will review responses and update the strategy where necessary. We will publish a report on the results of the consultation.

More information on the draft final strategy and the EQIA process can be found on the [Arts Council of Northern Ireland website \(opens in a new window\)](#). We advise you to read these documents before completing the on-line survey.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks, closing on Friday 5th April.

Please use the on-line survey to respond to the consultation. It will take between 10-15 minutes, depending on the detail you want to include.

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, we would ask that only one person from each organisation submits a response.

We may publish responses except for those where the respondent indicates that they are an individual acting in a private capacity (e.g. a member of the public).

Introduction

In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

Please select only one item

- An artist
- On behalf of an arts organisation
- As a member of the public who doesn't currently engage in the arts
- As a member of public who does currently engage in the arts
- On behalf of a local authority
- On behalf of a government body

- Private sector / business
- Resource organisation on behalf of its members
- Other (please specify below)

ACNI Strategy - Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

The Section 75 statutory duties aim to encourage public authorities, like the Arts Council, to address inequalities and demonstrate measurable positive impact on the lives of people experiencing inequalities. Its effective implementation should improve the quality of life for all the people of Northern Ireland.

We want to ensure our strategy doesn't adversely impact upon any of the Section 75 groups so have completed an [Equality Impact Assessment \(opens in a new window\)](#) (EQIA)

If you want to find out more about the Section 75 groups and the EQIA process, go to the [Equality Commission website \(opens In a new window\)](#).

Do you feel the final draft strategy will have any adverse or negative impacts on one or more of the Section 75 groups, that have not already been identified?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Religious belief			
Political opinion			
Racial group			
Age			
Marital status			
Sexual orientation			
Gender			
Disability, D/deaf and neurodivergent			

Yes

No

Don't Know

Dependents

If you answered 'yes' to any of the groups above, indicate what action you think should be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts on the group identified.

STRATEGY - Mission, Vision, Values

After talking to artists, arts organisations, government, and partners at the design stage of the strategy, we have developed the following mission, vision, and values to describe our role and where we're going.

Mission: To develop and champion the arts in Northern Ireland through investment and advocacy.

Vision: A society where all people can experience a thriving arts sector that is recognised as essential to creativity, well-being, and social and economic prosperity.

Values: Expertise, Inclusion, Collaboration, and Integrity

To what extent do you agree with the mission, vision, and values?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Do you have any further comments on the mission, vision, and values?

STRATEGY - Outcomes

Following widespread engagement and insights, we have decided on six outcomes we think will make a real difference to the arts sector and the wider society.

They are not mutually exclusive – we need all of them to work for the strategy to be successful.

Outcome 1

A more financially stable arts sector

- We will generate more income for the arts.
- We will pursue an approach to investment in the arts that is long term and outcomes based.

To what extent do you agree with Outcome 1?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Outcome 2

A sector that develops, looks after its people and is more inclusive.

- We will create the conditions to grow artistic talent and develop the wider arts workforce.
- We will ensure that the arts sector in Northern Ireland is inclusive and reflects society.

To what extent do you agree with Outcome 2?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Outcome 3

A sector that is better supported to develop through experimentation and innovation.

- We will enable innovation and artistic risk taking in the arts sector.

To what extent do you agree with Outcome 3?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Outcome 4

A sector that contributes to social and economic benefits, and cares about the environment.

- We will support arts projects that address contemporary societal challenges.
- We will support the sector and act as a catalyst to drive awareness, engagement, and positive change in response to climate change.

To what extent do you agree with Outcome 4?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Outcome 5

More people from all backgrounds can enjoy arts experiences.

- We will invest in the arts sector to deepen, widen, and diversify audiences and participants.

To what extent do you agree with Outcome 5?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Outcome 6

A sector that is more valued across society and government.

- We will work in partnership to demonstrate to policy makers, decision makers and peoples in Northern Ireland the positive impact of the arts.
- We will work as an effective and efficient organisation.

To what extent do you agree with Outcome 6?

Please select only one item

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Do you have any further comments on the outcomes or actions?

Further comments on outcomes and actions

STRATEGY - Actions

What would you view as the 3 most important themes associated with the draft final ten-year strategy?

Please select all that apply

- A more financially stable arts sector
- A sector that develops, looks after its people and is more inclusive
- A sector that is better supported to develop through experimentation and innovation
- A sector that contributes to social and economic benefits, and cares about the environment
- More people from all backgrounds can enjoy arts experiences
- A sector that is more valued across society and government

In the event that we need to better understand some of the responses collected, would you be willing to be contacted by the Arts Council to discuss your responses? Please note that your response will be treated as strictly confidential.

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No

About you

What is your gender identity?

Please select only one item

- Woman (including cis and trans women)
- Man (including cis and trans men)
- Non-Binary (including androgyne)
- Agender
- Gender fluid
- I prefer to describe myself in another way (detail below)
- Prefer not to say

Preferred description

What age bracket do you fall into?

Please select only one item

- 0-15
- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Prefer Not To Say

How would you describe yourself?

Please select only one item

- Disabled, D/deaf or Neurodivergent
- Non-Disabled, D/deaf, or Neurodivergent
- Prefer not to say

What is your ethnicity?

Please select only one item

- White
- Irish Traveller
- Roma
- Chinese
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Asian (not listed)
- Black Caribbean
- Black African
- Black Other
- Black (not listed)
- Arab
- Filipino
- Mixed Ethnic Group
- Ethnic group not listed (please specify below)

- Prefer not to say

Other ethnic group not specified above:

What is your sexuality?

Please select only one item

- Bisexual
- Gay Man
- Gay Woman / Lesbian
- Heterosexual / Straight
- Queer
- Pansexual
- Prefer to describe myself in another way (detail below)
- Prefer not to say

Preferred description

How did you find out about this consultation?

Please select only one item

- Facebook
- X/Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- Direct Eshot
- ACNI Newsletter
- Other Newsletter
- Word of Mouth
- Other

Please specify other

Appendix 2 – respondent characteristics

Gender

	Count	Column N %
Woman (including cis and trans women)	80	49.4%
Man (including cis and trans men)	53	32.7%
Non-Binary (including androgyne)	2	1.2%
I prefer to describe myself in another way (detail below)	3	1.9%
Prefer not to say	12	7.4%
Not Answered	12	7.4%
Total	162	100.0%

Age range

	Count	Column N %
16-24	7	4.3%
25-34	19	11.7%
35-44	37	22.8%
45-54	39	24.1%
55-64	30	18.5%
65+	17	10.5%
Not Answered	6	3.7%
Prefer Not to Say	7	4.3%
Total	162	100.0%

Disability

	Count	Column N %
Disabled, D/deaf or Neurodivergent	23	14.2%
Non-Disabled, D/deaf, or Neurodivergent	107	66.0%
Not Answered	11	6.8%
Prefer not to say	21	13.0%
Total	162	100.0%

Ethnicity

	Count	Column N %
White	144	88.9%
Not Answered	8	4.9%
Prefer not to say	5	3.1%
Mixed Ethnic Group	3	1.9%
Ethnic group not listed	1	0.6%
Pakistani	1	0.6%
Total	162	100.0%

Sexuality

	Count	Column N %
Heterosexual / Straight	117	72.2%
Prefer not to say	18	11.1%
Bisexual	10	6.2%
Not Answered	7	4.3%
Gay Man	5	3.1%
Gay Woman / Lesbian	3	1.9%
Pansexual	1	0.6%
Prefer to describe myself in another way	1	0.6%
Total	162	100.0%

How did you find out about the survey?

	Count	Column N %
Facebook	45	27.8%
ACNI Newsletter	31	19.1%
Other	20	12.3%
Word of Mouth	19	11.7%
Direct Eshot	17	10.5%
Not Answered	15	9.3%
Other Newsletter	5	3.1%
Instagram	4	2.5%
X/Twitter	4	2.5%
LinkedIn	2	1.2%
Total	162	100.0%

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