



Arts Council of Northern Ireland

10-Year Strategic Plan 2024-34

Young People's Version

Final Draft for Consultation



Did you know?

Younger people are more likely to attend arts events than older people. 87% of younger people went out to a gig or show or exhibition in the last year.



What does the Arts Council do?

The Arts Council is the main funder and champion of the arts in Northern Ireland. Our funding supports lots of the great arts that you see going on around you, or that you may even be involved in yourself, all the way from music and festivals to youth theatre and circus.

We support artists and arts organisations who make exciting and inspiring arts projects happen, plus many of the theatres, arts centres, galleries and venues where you go to enjoy the arts.

We often work in partnership with other government departments and their agencies, so that artists can have a positive presence in our schools, for example, through the Creative Schools Partnership, as well as being able to make an important contribution to improving young people's mental health, through our Young People & Wellbeing Arts Programme.

Participation in the arts is a great way to enjoy and have fun as you create, stretch your imagination and find the words, images or actions to express what matters to you.

What do artists do?

When we talk about 'Artists', we include musicians, singers, actors, dancers, acrobats, craft-makers, designers, animators, writers, painters, photographers, filmmakers...in fact, anyone whose work is all about being creative and imaginative.

We also talk about the 'Arts Sector', and this includes artists and the many other people who are also involved as part of the workforce that make the arts happen, such as backstage staff at theatres, lighting designers, prop-makers, directors, venue managers, festival organisers, technicians and volunteers.

What do we mean by "the Arts"?

The arts are all about enjoyment, entertainment and inspiration. The arts bring colour and meaning to our lives.

When we talk about "The Arts", we include gigs, DJing, playing an instrument, working creatively with digital and immersive technologies, going to plays or acting in them, making drawings, paintings, sculptures and crafts, or going to see them in an exhibition, reading books or writing stories, dancing, going to see films, taking photographs or making your own videos, animation, and lots more...

The Arts are about being inspired, connected and guided

A lively Arts scene helps communities to work together on our problems, creates jobs, inspires people, brings us success on the world stage and can even change the image of Northern Ireland.

We want to make sure the Arts are at the heart of life in Northern Ireland.

This is our plan for the next ten years – we want to hear what YOU think of it.

You can let us know by contacting strategy@artscouncil-ni.org

Or you can complete the consultation survey on our website at artscouncil-ni.org/10YearStrategy

If you belong to a group and would like someone from the Arts Council to meet with you, ask your group leader to contact us and we will do our best to arrange a meeting.

The consultation on our new 10-year Strategic Plan 2024-34, runs from **Friday 12th January to Friday 5th April 2024.**

If you want to find out more about the full Strategic Plan and the research and consultation that we have undertaken to help us to develop the plan, please visit our website, at artscouncil-ni.org/10YearStrategy



Our Mission, Vision and Values

Before we introduce you to our new Ten-Year Strategic Plan, let us tell you briefly about our Mission, Vision and Values, because these are the foundations that we have built our Plan on.

Our **Mission** tells everyone what we do.

We want to “to **develop** and **champion** the arts in Northern Ireland through **investment** and **advocacy**”.

In other words, we will use our funding to support artists as they create work and develop their careers. We will also support venues and organisations as they help artists to share their work with the public through, e.g., performances or exhibitions. We will then make sure that everyone appreciates how much our artists are contributing to people’s lives by promoting their work and its impact on wider society, to the public, the media, politicians and other influential people.

Our **Vision** tells everyone about the role we believe the arts can play in bringing about a better and more inclusive society for everyone.

We want to see “a society where **all people** can experience a **thriving arts sector** that is **recognised as essential** to creativity, wellbeing and social and economic prosperity”.

Our **Values** tell everyone about the principles that the Arts Council pledges to follow.

Expertise: We use our experience and expertise to support the arts sector through our funding decisions, and by providing important research and evidence to support us and the sector in promoting the wider contribution of the arts to the society we all live in.

Inclusion: We recognise the importance of diversity in the people who work in the arts and whose work reflects our changing society. We also recognise the importance of diversity in people who attend or participate in the arts, and we are committed to being inclusive and accessible to everyone.

Collaboration: We value our strong relationships with partners and their ability to enhance arts programmes across Northern Ireland and beyond.

Integrity: We are open, transparent, and fair in how we distribute our funding.

Our New Ten-Year Plan

We have taken an 'outcome-based' approach to our strategy. This means that we have focused first on where we would ideally like to see the arts in ten years' time, and then used this to decide the actions we will need to take to make this happen. We want to be ambitious, but we are also realistic about what it is possible for us to achieve in this time.

Our Outcomes

We have a set of outcomes specifically for the art sector, and a set of outcomes that the sector would then deliver for society as a whole. As you will see, the outcomes overlap and are often reliant on each other.



Outcomes for the Arts Sector



Outcome 1: A more financially stable arts sector.

Context: We all know that the arts make our lives more colourful and interesting. They also create jobs and bring money back into the economy. However, artists and arts organisations work in a very ‘tight’ funding environment, including unpredictable income and increasing costs of doing their jobs, e.g., staging a show. This often limits their ability to realise their full potential. These sorts of challenges can harm artistic innovation, limit access to the arts, and create barriers to careers in the arts.

To achieve Outcome 1 we will:

- **Generate more income for the arts**
-e.g., press government to make a bigger investment in the arts and talk to other funding sources, such as businesses, about getting more involved.
- **Pursue long-term investment in the arts**
-e.g., launch a funding programme for arts organisations that provides funding in three-year cycles, rather than one-year cycles as is currently the case, so that they can forward plan with greater security and confidence.
- **Ensure long-term investment promotes activity across NI and beyond urban centres**

Outcome 2: A sector that develops, looks after its people, and is more inclusive.

Context: The arts sector relies on the creativity, skills and expertise of its workforce to produce high-quality creative experiences and attract a diverse range of audiences. However, challenges such as limited employment opportunities and lack of diversity and representation within the arts sector itself, can hinder the sector's ability to attract and retain talent.

To achieve Outcome 2 we will:

- **Create the conditions to grow artistic talent and develop the wider arts workforce**
-e.g., in addition to providing artists with funding, we will develop international showcasing opportunities and invest in a new programme specifically to support the mental health and wellbeing of artists
- **Ensure that the arts sector is inclusive and reflects society**
-e.g., work with partners who have the skill-sets to improve access to the arts for D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people, and create a dedicated fund to make it easier and more attractive for underrepresented groups to get involved in the arts.

Outcome 3: A sector that is better supported to develop through experimentation and innovation.

Context: We know that artists are creative people. They are all about innovation, and innovation involves taking risks. We want to encourage innovation and provide the space for experimentation that is essential for the growth and development of the arts sector.

To achieve Outcome 3 we will:

- **Enable innovation and artistic risk taking**
-e.g., strengthen opportunities for artists to work with other artists so they can share knowledge and expertise across art forms, including artists contributing to Creative Industries projects, using digital and immersive technologies.

Outcomes for Society



Outcome 4: A sector that contributes to social and economic benefits and cares about the environment.

Context: Artists are already leading change and contributing positively to our society and our economy, especially in areas such as health, wellbeing and tourism. We want to protect and enhance this work. As the world faces urgent environmental challenges, it is crucial for artists to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable practices and environmental responsibility.

To achieve Outcome 4 we will:

- **Support arts projects that address the challenges of modern society**
-e.g., support cross-departmental work which results in more partnerships between arts organisations and government departments and agencies in relation to health and social care
- **Support the arts sector in driving awareness and positive change in response to climate change**
-e.g., add Climate as a theme within all of our investment programmes, which will support sustainable practice and enable artists and organisations to respond to climate change.

Outcome 5: People from all backgrounds can enjoy arts experiences.

Context: The Arts Council believes that access to arts is a fundamental right for all people. Access to arts experiences is important to people's creative lives and personal development. The arts are also particularly good at bringing communities closer together. However, certain barriers, such as physical, financial, social, and cultural barriers, can limit people's ability to participate fully in the arts.

To achieve Outcome 5 we will:

- **Invest in the arts sector to help them widen the diversity of their audiences and participants**

-e.g., prioritise projects which will increase the involvement of groups of people who currently have low levels of engagement in the arts, and develop a new Access scheme to help venues improve access and make buying tickets and visiting arts venues easier and more for appealing for D'deaf, disabled and neurodiverse audiences.

Outcome 6: A sector that is more valued across society and government.

Context: The arts sector contributes to Northern Ireland in so many ways. It stimulates creativity, encourages innovation, brings communities together, and supports tourism and economic growth. However, the full potential of the arts sector's contribution is not always recognised or prioritised across all government departments. The Arts Council wants to address this by promoting the value of the arts and building stronger relationships between the arts sector and government departments and their agencies.

To achieve Outcome 6 we will:

- **Demonstrate the positive impact of the arts to politicians and decision makers**

-e.g., work in partnership with arts organisations to conduct and share research and case studies on the impact of the arts on key areas of our lives, such as health and education.

- **Work as an effective and efficient organisation**

-e.g., ensure the Arts Council continues to be accountable and transparent to the public about what we are doing, and set an example by promoting best practice and best value for money.





**What do you think of our plans?
Anything you like / don't like?
What else could we do?**

**Let us know what you think.
You can contact us by
Email, strategy@artscouncil-ni.org
Facebook [/artscouncilni](https://www.facebook.com/artscouncilni)
or X/Twitter [@artscouncilni](https://twitter.com/artscouncilni)**

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