

# REVIEW OF THE ANNUAL FUNDING PROGRAMME (AFP) FOR THE ARTS COUNCIL OF NORTHERN IRELAND- STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS REPORT

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Introduction

### AFP Stakeholders

- Overall, the findings from the surveys present a very positive picture of ACNI as a well regarded organisation that has had a very long relationship with most of the organisations in the AFP, where most measures are as good or better than those achieved by ACE.
- The majority of AFP stakeholders are favourable towards ACNI and advocacy is high
- Stakeholders are positive about ACNI's overall performance, that it has maintained its level of effectiveness in achieving its mission of making great art accessible to everyone and that ACNI makes a positive difference to Northern Ireland
- Most of the stakeholders have a good working relationship with ACNI and are in regular contact at the frequency they require and are provided with the right amount of information
- Nearly a quarter of the organisations state that the relocation of ACNI to Lisburn has had an adverse effect on their working relationship and others felt that an organisation with the status of ACNI should be located in the capital city
- Discounting the impact of this relocation, working relationships have improved in particular through the supportive nature of ACNI staff
- ACNI's objectives and mission have been well communicated to stakeholders although there is less clarity around the relevance of these goals
- Stakeholders are very positive about ACNI's impact in a number of key areas of activity in particular supporting excellence in the arts and culture and enabling more people to experience and be inspired by arts and culture
- ACNI is considered as open with its stakeholders and confident in making and defending decisions and open to challenge and consultation when required
- ACNI uses language that is inclusive and provides the right amount of information using the most appropriate channels
- Stakeholders are confident in the current leadership of ACNI and that the partnership between AFP organisations and ACNI is built on mutual understanding and trust
- Stakeholders would like to see ACNI focusing more on investment in the arts and culture, making the case for investment in the arts and culture and supporting and nurturing organisations and artists at the same time making significant changes in the way in which it funds activity, being better at working in

partnership and collaboration, listening more to stakeholders and providing better and clearer advice on funding

### Unsuccessful AFP Applicants

- From the small sample who responded, it would appear that applicants hold some aspects of ACNI in high regard and consider that they had no problems with the application process
- However, the applicants do not fully understand why their applications were unsuccessful

### Partnering Organisations

- Many of the organisations stated that they had an excellent working relations with ACNI and held them in high regard. In addition they identified many different ways in which they could work together
- The partnering organizations have identified the same most important outcomes that they can help ACNI deliver however they did rate providing expertise and intelligence about arts and culture as a higher priority than the funded organisations

### Programme for Government (PfG)

- AFP funded organizations and partnering organizations, identified the same most important PfG outcomes that they can help ACNI deliver i.e. the most important outcomes are delivering an innovative, creative society where people can fulfil their potential, creating a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest, creating a confident, welcoming and outward looking society, having a shared society that respects diversity
- PfG identified many indicators that could be used to measure how well outcomes are being delivered. All of the 25 indicators that were considered applicable to potential outcomes were identified as being applicable. However no single indicator was considered applicable by all with the most significant indicator mentioned by 95% of stakeholders as improving cultural participation and the least reducing preventable deaths (14%)
- Other highly significant indicators are increasing the confidence and capabilities of communities (94%), increasing respect for each other (90%), and improving our international reputation (86%)
- Less significant indicators identified by 40 or more stakeholders are improving our attractiveness as a destination (75%) increasing reconciliation (71%), increasing the quality of life for people with disabilities (70%) increasing shared space (68%) and improving the quality of education (65%)

### ACNI Priorities over next 12 months

- Over the next 12 months, stakeholders would like to see ACNI focusing on investment in the arts and culture, making the case for investment in the arts and culture and supporting and nurturing organizations and artists

- The four most significant changes required are changing the way ACNI funds activity , ACNI being better at working in partnership and collaboration , listening more to stakeholders and providing better and clearer advice on funding
- Partnering organisations gave a higher priority to ACNI **providing expertise and intelligence about arts and culture** and the need to change is work on more joint initiatives with the partnering organizations, clearly indicating the desire of the partners to work more closely with ACNI.

### Recommendations ACNI should

- Consider rebalancing funding allocations across rural and urban areas possibly with more funding allocated to the North West however there is a need to support organisations that deliver outcomes irrespective of where they are located
- Tailor the application form to the amount of funding sought with the need for smaller organisations to provide less detail
- Consider a three year funding programme which would enable organisations to plan better and be more productive
- Fund fewer organisations with increased amounts to others which would allow ACNI to be more strategic with its funding decisions
- Work with partners to ensure greater collaboration across funders to streamline and reduce the level of information required
- Consider the use of art form allocations where possible
- In the long term consider a return to multi-annual funding which allows for greater planning and better value for money
- Consider the provision of transitional funding for those that fail to be funded for future years
- Implement system improvements that were identified from the internal review including clearer definitions, simplifying the application process, There should be a level playing field across art forms with all commercial opportunities available to each form, address potential ICT issues, change processing of rejection letters, simplify Equality forms and use of appropriate ranking for multiartform applications

### Next Steps

- **For ACNI** – this report needs to be considered by ACNI and an action plan drawn up to confirm which of the recommendations can be addressed and in what timescale
- **For SIB** – As the recommendations are based on the requirements of the various stakeholders SIB will produce another report considering the main characteristics of the current AFP and also make comparisons with the equivalent schemes that are operated in the other UK countries and the Republic of Ireland. This will help validate some of the recommendations

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# SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Introduction

A new Programme for Government (PfG) had been published based on a commitment to working in a more outcome focused way with an emphasis on: economic advancement, tackling disadvantage and improving citizen's wellbeing.

In the context of pressurised funding, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) continues to mitigate the impact of spending reductions on the most vulnerable in society by working with their strategic partners to protect "frontline services" and to encourage arts organisations to engage with the private sector to increase sponsorship; to raise awareness of the work of Trusts and Foundations; and to encourage applications for European sources of funding.

In order to ensure that the AFP addresses the changed strategic context ACNI identified as a priority in 2016/17 the need to review the Annual Funding Programme to ensure strategic alignment with the new Programme for Government and the Strategy for Culture and Arts (2016-26). This report provides a review of AFP as seen from the perspective of the stakeholders.

## 1.2 Background

ACNI have previously carried out a series of client satisfaction surveys since 2006 the most recent being in 2014. These surveys measure the importance clients attach to, and their satisfaction with, a range of aspects of service. Clients were asked to rate their satisfaction with ACNI's progress towards its strategic objectives and with the Council's performance overall.

The latest survey involved the random sampling of ACNI funded clients from each of the following four funding streams to achieve a final sample of 144 completed interviews: Annual Support for Organisations Programme (ASOP); Support for the Individual Artist Programme (SIAP); · Lottery; · and small grants programme.

Overall satisfaction with ACNI was considered to be high, with a Client Satisfaction Index score of 74.2%. This represented a small but steady increase in satisfaction, from 73.4% in 2006, 73.7% in 2008 and 73.9% in 2010. The 2012 satisfaction scores varied by funding group, with SIAP clients expressing the highest levels of satisfaction (79.9%), followed by Lottery clients (78.7%), small grant recipients (76.1%) and ASOP (now AFP) clients expressing the lowest levels (69.7%). The mean satisfaction score was 7.12. This

compares to a mean score of 7.41 in 2006, 7.05 in 2008 and 7.09 in 2010. Whilst this approach allows changes to be measured over time it does not provide a reference point for ACNI with other Arts Councils.

### 1.3 Approach

The Strategic Investment Board (SIB) has carried out a survey of stakeholders involved with the Annual Funding Programme (AFP) for ACNI. The survey provides information for ACNI to be aware of its reputation, understand its perceived performance and gather insight and feedback about challenges within the sector. The programme of stakeholder research was carried out between July and September 2016 involved research with:

- The 109 organisations that were successful in receiving AFP awards in the 2015 allocation.
- Around 20 organisations that either had an AFP award in a previous year or were unsuccessful in their application for 2015
- 12 government or Arms Length Bodies who partner with ACNI in the delivery of programmes including AFP; and
- 20 Internal Staff of the ACNI who are involved with the AFP process

## SECTION 2: METHODOLOGY

The Arts Council in England (ACE) also carries out various stakeholder researches and therefore many of the questions used in the ACE survey were used as the basis for questions to ACNI so that there was a benchmark to compare ACNI with ACE. The table below summarises the number of contacts from each stakeholder group and the number completing the survey.

Arts Council of Northern Ireland stakeholder sample details			
Stakeholder group	Total sample	Total completes	Response rate
AFP Organisations from 2015	109	63	58%
Previous AFP Organisations or those Unsuccessful in 2015	20	3	15%
Public Sector Organisations	12	11	92%
ACNI Internal Staff	20	5	25%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>51%</b>

The surveys were included in an e-mail sent by ACNI to their contacts with a request that the response should be sent directly to SIB. The initial email to AFP successful and unsuccessful applicants was followed up by a reminder email. Many of the responses were received around the final date when responses were requested (12<sup>th</sup> September 2016).

In total, 161 emails were sent and 82 survey responses received. The response rate for the main target group of the survey (AFP funded organisations) at 58% was particularly high for this type of survey. The response rate compares favourably to that of the 46% obtained by ACE although this was to a slightly different base of stakeholders. Unsurprisingly the response rate was fairly low for those organisations that

had failed to obtain AFP funding in the last round and the small sample size must be taken into account when examining the response.

In order to evaluate if the response was representative of the sector the respondents were analysed by both amount awarded and art form as shown in the tables below.

AFP Recipient sample details			
AFP Award	Total sample	Total completes	Response rate
Above £200,000	10	6	60%
Award of £100,000 to £200,000	29	18	62%
Award of £50,000 to £100,000	33	14	42%
Less than £50,000	37	25	68%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>58%</b>

AFP Recipient sample details			
Main Art Form	Total sample	Total completes	Response rate
Community	12	4	33%
Dance/Drama	17	10	59%
Music/Opera	13	7	54%
Traditional	11	2	18%
Visual	17	5	29%
Youth	11	4	36%
Other	28	23	82%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>58%</b>

The tables show that there was more variation in the response rate between art forms than by funding awarded.

The results of the surveys together with the forms used to collect the information are included in the Appendices to this report in a separate document i.e.:

- Appendix 1 – Survey form and responses from 63 AFP organisations
- Appendix 2 – This is the consolidated response from the 25 (40%) of the organisations who provided comments with their response.
- Appendix 3 - Survey form (simplified from Appendix 1) and responses from 3 unsuccessful AFP applicants
- Appendix 4 – Survey form and response from 11 organisations who might partner with ACNI in the provision of services.

## SECTION 3: KEY FINDINGS FROM AFP FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

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### 3.1 Key impressions of the Arts Council

- Most of the organizations have had a very long relationship with ACNI and 76% of them have worked with or been in contact with ACNI for over 10 years and a further 10% between 7 and 10 years. This potentially demonstrates two aspects, the longevity and sustainability of organizations in Northern Ireland, but also demonstrates the potential difficulty of a new organization receiving ACNI AFP funding
- The **majority of the AFP stakeholders are favourable towards ACNI** where 79% are favourable, which compares well with the 78% achieved by ACE when they posed the same question to stakeholders.
- Similarly, **advocacy is high**. Advocacy quantifies how stakeholders would speak of the organization to other people, 73% say they would speak highly of the ACNI compared to 64% for ACE.

### 3.2 Performance and impact

- A majority of stakeholders are **positive about the ACNI's overall performance** as an organization with 73% saying it performs well compared with 75% for ACE.
- On balance, a majority of stakeholders (55%) believe that the Arts Council **has maintained its level of effectiveness, or become more effective in its work to achieve its mission of making great art accessible to everyone** over the past year.
- Organisations believe that ACNI's work has most impact at a national level i.e. 94% agree that **the ACNI makes a positive difference in Northern Ireland (the response was 91% for ACE in England)**. To a lesser extent, stakeholders are also positive about the Arts Council's work in their region (78%) and in their specific local area (78%). Around half (49%) consider that ACNI makes a difference at the international level

### 3.3 Working relationships

- Most of the stakeholders **are in contact with ACNI on a monthly basis e.g. 30% two to three times a month 38% monthly and 23% every two to three months**
- The vast majority of stakeholders have the **right amount of contact with the ACNI** with only two wanting more contact and two wanting less contact...
- Overall, **a majority of stakeholders have a good working relationship with the ACNI 87%** compared with 79% for ACE.

- No Stakeholder has identified that the relocation of ACNI to Lisburn has been beneficial **whilst nearly a quarter (22%) confirmed that the move to Lisburn has had either a fairly or very adverse impact in maintaining the quality of the working relationship between ACNI and the organization.**
- When this impact of relocation is discounted, whilst 63% state the working relations have stayed the same nearly three times as many (28%) consider relationships have improved compared with the 10% that consider relationships have got worse.
- The main reasons why organizations considered relations have got better were: that they found the staff helpful and supportive (cited by all those that had identified improvements in the working relationship), followed by ACNI better understanding their organization's aims (65%), closer working with ACNI in the last year and ACNI having a better understanding of the sector in which they operated (60%). In contrast to this where it was claimed the working relationship had worsened the main reason was due to less contact with ACNI, lack of continuity of staff who they deal with, ACNI not sharing information and ACNI not working well in partnership.

### 3.4 Values and Behaviours

- ACNI's objectives have clearly been well-communicated to stakeholders; with nearly nine in ten (87%) saying they **understand its goals and priorities well**. Stakeholders also believe the ACNI has a **strong sense of mission** (76%) and have a good understanding of the **plan or strategy behind this mission** (68%).
- However, **there is less clarity around the relevance of these goals**. Although three in five (59%) feel that ACNI's goals and priorities are relevant to and meet the needs of the wider public, nearly one in five (17%) disagree. Similarly, less than half (48%) believe that ACNI sets its goals and priorities based on the needs of artists and arts and cultural organizations
- Organizations considered that the public benefited most from ACNI's work, followed by the artists then Government and finally the organization which the employed the artist
- However when asked to identify which groups should benefit the organizations considered that all groups should benefit equally.
- On the whole, stakeholders are **very positive about the Arts Council's impact in a number of key areas of activity**, including supporting and promoting excellence in arts and culture (81%), enabling more people to experience and be inspired by arts and culture (92%) and enabling artistic talent to thrive (71%), supporting arts and cultural organizations to become more sustainable and resilient (58%), encouraging innovation and experimentation (60%), developing the knowledge and skills of arts and cultural leadership and workforce (53%), developing a more diverse and cultural leadership and workforce (46%), promoting arts and culture to reflect diversity (78%), enabling every child and young person to have the opportunity to experience arts and culture (67%), encouraging greater public

awareness of and enthusiasm about arts and culture (67%) and finally ensuring access to knowledge and learning experience for all (59%)

### 3.5 Openness

- A majority of stakeholders (68%) consider that **ACNI is open with its stakeholders** and partners and that ACNI (65%) is **confident in making and defending decisions**, in addition ACNI (78%) is not considered to be afraid to challenge the organization or help the organization improve
- ACNI (68%) is perceived as seeking feedback from its stakeholders and partners and **only a minority (30%) find it difficult to challenge ACNI** when they do not agree with it.
- Finally **ACNI is considered to be a good sounding board** where 70% consider that it listens to and understands their views

### 3.6 Communications

- Whilst most of the stakeholders (63%) feel that **ACNI acts as one organization and does not send mixed messages** there is a significant proportion (24%) that consider it does not really act as one organization
- A similar effect relates to the understanding what ACNI stands for, with 51% being clear but 21% being unclear
- In contrast 65% consider that **ACNI uses language that is inclusive and easy for others to understand** and 71% consider that ACNI's goals and priorities are clear and easy to understand
- A large proportion (46%) consider **ACNI as the first port of call for guidance** and advice on funding and nearly half (49%) consider that it is a useful source of intelligence and information that helps them do their job better
- **Contact with ACNI staff is considered to be the most useful channel of communication**, with nearly two thirds (62%) describing it as very useful. The ACNI website and other digital channels such as social media channels are slightly less useful (57%) and networking and capacity building events (41%) considered to be the least useful channel of communication
- **Most stakeholders (83%) consider that they are either very well or fairly well informed** about the work of ACNI, 68% consider they receive the right amount and only 21% consider that they receive a limited amount of information and would like more

### 3.7 Respect and Partnership

- **79% consider that the partnership between AFP organizations and ACNI is based on mutual understanding and benefit** and 75% respect the way in which ACNI goes about its work
- **60% have confidence in the current leadership of ACNI and over half (51%) consider ACNI makes bold decisions** in the interests of the arts and culture in Northern Ireland

- Slightly less than half (43%) consider that **ACNI knows how to work with partners from outside the arts and cultural sector** but over half (52%) consider that ACNI understands the impact of its work and funded activity on other policy areas outside of arts and culture
- Around half (48%) disagree that ACNI is not very good at working collaboratively towards shared objectives and 40% consider that ACNI is able to broker and facilitate relationships between their organization and others
- Only one third (33%) consider that ACNI has improved its partnerships with stakeholders and national partners, and that these benefit the arts and cultural sectors

### 3.8 Accountability and Trust

- Accountability and trust are central to explaining how public funds are allocated through the AFP process and responses to this section of the survey are crucial to understanding the achievement of AFP objectives.
- 65% of the stakeholders agree that the **decisions ACNI makes are clearly linked to its vision and goals**
- There is however less confidence in the way in which investment decisions are explained with only 35% considering explanations are reasonable
- 44% consider that the **decisions of ACNI are informed by sound evidence**
- The greatest agreement 80% is that **ACNI holds the organizations it funds properly to account** although a third (33%) consider that **it is difficult for ACNI to show the value of its investments** in funded organizations, however three quarters (75%) consider that **ACNI is aware of the future challenges and opportunities for the arts and culture** in Northern Ireland.
- On all accounts ACNI is considered by funded organizations to be **a trusted partner in the arts and culture sector** e.g. 75% agree ACNI upholds the arms-length principle where funding decisions are independent of government and the same proportion agree that ACNI invests wisely to support Northern Ireland's arts and ecology in an intelligent way i.e. ACNI makes the best possible use of its resources to fund arts and culture across Northern Ireland.
- 81% consider that **ACNI acts as a strong advocate for the arts and culture** sector and 65% consider that ACNI helps people across the sector to work together.

### 3.9 AFP Funding Processes

- 65% consider that **ACNI collects the right amount of data** from funded organizations and projects although only 40% consider that ACNI makes good use of the data it collects from the funded organizations.
- The funding process is **more complicated than other funders' schemes** with only 35% considering that it is less complicated than other funders.

- Around half (48%) consider that **ACNI is flexible or responsive** in its approach to funding.
- More stakeholders (41%) disagree that the process for applying for **funding is bureaucratic and prohibitive** however a significant proportion (32%) do consider that the process is bureaucratic
- Most stakeholders (85%) understand what funding is available for different activities
- There is general **contentment on the way in which the latest AFP process** was carried out i.e. 92% consider that the eligibility criteria to apply for funding were clearly explained and easy to understand, 76% considered that the application form was clear and easy to complete, 86% considered that sufficient information was made available to help them complete the application form, 81% considered that any advice or information received was in a timely manner and that it was informative and helpful, 76% consider that their application was dealt with in an efficient and timely manner but fewer 65% consider that the decision making process for funding awards is fair and transparent

### 3.10 Programme for Government

- The new Programme for Government (PfG) sets out how government funding such as through the AFP will be used to deliver various outcomes. It is therefore important for stakeholders to consider what outcomes are most likely to be delivered through funding their organization. Of the 14 outcomes identified in PfG ten were considered to be potentially applicable to funded organizations. Stakeholders ranked the outcomes in terms of which their organization contributed to most.
- From Appendix 1 Section 10 the cumulative score is provided e.g. if one item had been given the highest ranking by all it would have a score of 63 and if it obtained the lowest rank it would have scored 630.
- From the cumulative scores it can be seen that there is considerable variation in the allocation of importance and instead of a range of 63 to 630 a much smaller range of 137 to 482 exists. The outcomes can be divided into four bands less than 200, 201 to 300, 301 to 400 and greater than 400
- **The most important outcome are delivering an innovative, creative society where people can fulfil their potential (average rank 2.17),**
- The next most significant outcomes are **creating a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest (3.56), creating a confident, welcoming and outward looking society (4.02); giving our children and young people the best start in life (4.30) having a shared society that respects diversity (4.33)**
- Less significant outcomes are having a more equal society (5.73) and contributing to the enjoyment of long health lives (5.73)
- The least significant outcomes are contributing to a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy (6.65), having more people working in better jobs ((7.28) and finally having a safer community where we respect the law and each other (7.65)

- PfG identified many indicators that could be used to measure how well outcomes are being delivered. All of the 25 indicators that were considered applicable to potential outcomes were identified as being applicable. However no single indicator was considered applicable by all with **the most significant indicator mentioned by 95% of stakeholders as improving cultural participation** and the least reducing preventable deaths (14%)
- Other highly **significant indicators are increasing the confidence and capabilities of communities (94%), increasing respect for each other (90%), and improving our international reputation (86%)**
- Less significant indicators identified by 40 or more stakeholders are **improving our attractiveness as a destination (75%) increasing reconciliation (71%), increasing the quality of life for people with disabilities (70%) increasing shared space (68%) and improving the quality of education (65%)**

### 3.11 Future priorities

- From Appendix 1 Section 11 the cumulative score is provided e.g. if one item had been given the highest ranking by all it would have a score of 63 and if it obtained the lowest rank it would have scored 630.
- Over the next 12 months, **stakeholders would like to see the ACNI focusing on investment in the arts and culture (rank 2.16), making the case for investment in the arts and culture (2.67) and supporting and nurturing organizations (2.97) and artists (3.54)**
- Lower priorities are ensuring that ACNI investment across Northern Ireland is distributed in a fair and more geographically balanced way (5.90) and ACNI maintain regular and open communication on the stakeholders organization (6.26)
- The lowest priorities are supporting more collaboration across the arts and cultural sector (6.65), providing expertise and specialist advice and intelligence about arts and culture (7.17), being transparent about decision making (7.24) and finally continuing to improve its operation efficiency (7.37)

### 3.12 Changes required to improve ACNI service

- As well as identifying future priorities for ACNI ,stakeholders have also identified where ACNI needs to change to improve services to stakeholder organizations
- The four most significant changes that are required are **changing the way it funds activity (2.90), being better at working in partnership and collaboration (3), listening more to stakeholders (3.07) and providing better and clearer advice on funding (3.21)**
- Naturally the lowest level of change was in areas where ACNI was already proving a good service i.e. better and clearer communication with ACNI staff (3.78), more personal contact with ACNI staff (4.10) and providing more information about its work (4.27)

## SECTION 4: DETAILED COMMENTS FROM AFP FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

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### 4.1 Introduction

- This is the consolidated response from the 25 (40%) of the organisations who provided comments with their response. These are mainly based on the wording provided by the respondents but they have been edited to remove information that was either not relevant or else would identify the organisation that provided the information. Whilst Appendix 1 measures the level of response for the number of organisations that are content with an individual item such as good delivery of a service, Appendix 2 may reflect views of several or only single organisation. For example Section 6 of the Appendix provides detailed criticism of ACNI, which must be placed in context as this was only from one organisation out of the 63 who responded.

### 4.2 Overall Impressions on ACNI Staff

- Many comments document the excellent relationship between the organisation and their ACNI contact.
- The personal relationship with the ACNI representative in particular is seen as a positive one.

### 4.3 Equality Considerations

- Whilst complying with Equality considerations is mandatory it is considered that a simpler format might still be compliant.

### 4.4 Implications of Budget Cuts

- Some of the relationships have recently become strained through the recent cuts in budgets.

### 4.5 Location of ACNI

- More reasoning has been provided why organisations consider that ACNI should have a base in Belfast and the importance of ACNI having a base in the capital city. As three quarters of the funded organisations are based in Belfast it is expected that ACNI should also be located there to be convenient to the clients it serves.

### 4.6 Role of ACNI

- The need to address the dual role of funder and working in collaboration with the clients it serves
- The need to engage more with politicians and articulate the benefits and provide a better understanding on the importance of culture.

#### 4.7 AFP Process

- There is a perceived need to rebalance funding allocations across rural and urban areas
- Return to multi-annual funding which allows for greater planning and better value for money
- Provision of transitional funding for those that fail to be funded for future years
- Need for dedicated officers in some art forms such as dance and drama
- A three year funding programme would enable organisations to plan better and be more productive
- Greater collaboration across funders could streamline and reduce the level of information required
- More funding allocated to the North West and the problem with handling funding to the largest clients
- Need to support organisations that deliver outcomes irrespective of where they are located
- Funding fewer organisations with increased amounts would allow ACNI to be more strategic with its funding decisions
- Tailor the application form to the amount of funding sought with the need for smaller organisations to provide less detail
- There should be a level playing field across art forms with all commercial opportunities available to each form

#### 4.8 Criticism of ACNI

- One organisation was very critical of ACNI and therefore for completion the comments are included here, however it is notable that no other organisation has expressed similar comments and they must be read in this context

#### 4.9 Assessment of Value of the Application

- Need to stress the value of arts in delivering excellence
- Benchmarking funding across other Arts Councils, having fewer clients, administrative costs and streamlining funding streams
- Provision of seminars to help organisations improve their planning
- Need for greater collaboration between leisure sectors
- Provision of more networking opportunities
- Availability of a more up to date system for processing applications
- Availability of assessor reports to validate success of funding

## SECTION 5: PREVIOUSLY AFP FUNDED ORGANISATIONS AND UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

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### 5.1 Introduction

- The objective of this survey was to establish the difference in perceptions from organisations that have been unsuccessful in applying for AFP funding. Emails were sent to 20 organisations although it is not clear whether all the organisations are still operational. A very small response of three completed forms was received and therefore the conclusions in this section should bear in mind the small sample size. The detailed analysis of the response is provided in Appendix 3.
- Each of the organisations has made both successful and unsuccessful applications, although the last application made was unsuccessful and they have been in the contact with ACNI for several years.

### 5.2 Main Differences between Successful and Unsuccessful Applicants

- Whilst successful applicants considered that the decision making process for funding awards is fair the unsuccessful applicants considered that the process was not fair and that they could not understand why their application was unsuccessful
- The organisations, however had no problems with the overall application process.
- None of the organisations managed to find funding elsewhere to meet the shortfall
- The organisations are in contact with ACNI on a similar basis to the successful organisations
- The organisations are less favourably disposed to ACNI than successful organisations
- The unsuccessful organisations consider that the most important things ACNI should be doing are the same as the successful organisations i.e. supporting and nurturing organisations and artists, making the case for investment in arts and culture and continued investment

### 5.3 Comments from Unsuccessful Applicants

- Comments made by unsuccessful applicants recognise the assistance that has been provided from the initial grant but tempered by the frustration at losses in support in future years i.e.
- "I am very grateful for what the Council has helped me do but as that help dries up it leads to frustration at an organisation that is designed to help create culture but has ended up stifling it. There is little investment in emerging individual talent and little support for growing organisations. There is initial

funding to help at the outset, but little if they want to grow and capitalise on successes or actually be competitive in an increasingly global cultural sector.”

- “The issues the arts face have not changed for two generations. ACNI has changed dramatically, of course more could be achieved, but the reality is that it is a markedly different organisation from the 1970s. There is still the issue that a few large arts organisations receive half the budget, but it is still remarkable that so many organisations continue to be funded, crucial to do this to encourage creativity and new ways of expression. ACNI management of the austerity cuts, painful as they are, was impressive. So too was the efforts of staff to campaign for the arts I think I would like to see a government department which could match such resolve.”

## SECTION 6: ACNI PARTNERING ORGANISATIONS

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### 6.1 Introduction

- Twelve organisations were selected that interact and work with ACNI to deliver programmes such as AFP. The survey was reduced in size to reflect the difference in relationship between these organisations and AFP recipients.

### 6.2 Assessment of Partners Responses

- Many of the organisations are in regular contact with ACNI and none of the organisations has a poor relationship with ACNI. As the organisations were not in receipt of funding many of comments are non-committal but where comments are provided they are supportive of the approach adopted by ACNI
- The partnering organizations have identified the same most important outcomes that they can help ACNI deliver i.e.
- **The most important outcome is delivering an innovative, creative society where people can fulfil their potential (average rank 2.7),**
- The next most significant outcomes are **creating a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest (3.3), creating a confident, welcoming and outward looking society (3.4); having a shared society that respects diversity (3.1)**
- The partners also identified the same outcomes which were the most significant measures on determining if the outcomes had been delivered i.e. 8 organisations identified **improving cultural participation, increasing the confidence and capabilities of communities and increasing respect for each other.**
- Over the next 12 months partnering organizations broadly agree with the views expressed by AFP funded organizations i.e. **ACNI focusing on investment in the arts and culture , making the case for investment in the arts and culture, supporting and nurturing organizations and artists**
- However they did rate **providing expertise and intelligence about arts and culture** as a higher priority than the funded organisations
- By far the most important thing that ACNI need to change is work on more joint initiatives with the partnering organizations, clearly indicating the desire of the partners to work more closely with ACNI.

### 6.3 Statements of Support from Partnering Organisations

- Many of the organisations stated that they had excellent working relations with ACNI and held them in high regard. In addition they identified different ways in which they could work together i.e.

- **Education Authority** working with the Amma Centre to engage with schools and young people to improve educational outcomes, reducing inequality and supporting young people achieving their potential.
- **The Executive Office** delivering an international arts engagement programme promoting culture and creativity
- **NI Bureau** jointly fund events in the US
- **Derry City and Strabane District Council** work to deliver additional investment in the arts sector, move to multi annual funding and alignment of complementary local government and grant programmes; ACNI to lead on larger European Programmes. Adopt a strategic partnership approach to deliver various programmes.
- **Belfast City Council** joint working to deliver the cultural framework for the Belfast Action Plan 2016 – 2020

## SECTION 7: ACNI INTERNAL REVIEW

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### 7.1 Introduction

- ACE have recently carried out a very detailed analysis on how they operate the large annual funding programme. From the areas of concern that were identified a series of prompts was produced to be used as a basis to evaluate the operation of the AFP scheme by ACNI.

### 7.2 Changes Suggested to AFP Processing

- **Definitions – clearer definitions of sustainability, difference in artform descriptors, rational on considering applications**
- **Changing Application Process** not separate the application process into three parts
- **Concern Resolution** - earlier resolution of concerns identified by potential applicants
- **IT System** – ensure where possible outstanding ICT issues are resolved prior to the commencement of the next round
- **Artform Budgets** – these are being adopted by SIAP if possible this approach would make moderation easier for AFP
- **Previous Budgets** – a consistent approach needs to be adopted in matching previous to proposed funding budgets
- **Rejection Letters** – change the processing and signing of rejection letters
- **Equality Processing** – whilst still meeting Equality considerations simplify the handling of Equality data
- **Multi Artform Applications** – determine a suitable cross art form ranking system

## SECTION 8

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 8.1 Introduction

- Recommendations arise from two sources. Firstly the analysis states what each stakeholder identifies should be the future priorities of ACNI and secondly specific statements that have been made by the different stakeholders in respect of the AFP process. These are collated in this section of the report after removing duplicate recommendations.

### 8.2 ACNI Priorities over next 12 months

- **From 3.1** over the next 12 months, stakeholders would like to see the ACNI focusing on investment in the arts and culture, making the case for investment in the arts and culture and supporting and nurturing organizations and artists
- **From 3.12** the four most significant changes that are required are changing the way ACNI funds activity, being better at working in partnership and collaboration, listening more to stakeholders and providing better and clearer advice on funding
- **From 6.2** they consider **providing expertise and intelligence about arts and culture** as a higher priority than the funded organisations
- **From 7.2** By far the most important thing that ACNI need to change is to work on more joint initiatives with the partnering organizations, clearly indicating the desire of the partners to work more closely with ACNI.

### 8.3 Recommendations

- Consider rebalancing funding allocations across rural and urban areas possibly with more funding allocated to the North West however there is a need to support organisations that deliver outcomes irrespective of where they are located
- Tailor the application form to the amount of funding sought with the need for smaller organisations to provide less detail
- Consider a three year funding programme which would enable organisations to plan better and be more productive
- Fund fewer organisations with increased amounts which would allow ACNI to be more strategic with its funding decisions
- Work with partners ensure greater collaboration across funders to streamline and reduce the level of information required
- Consider the use of art form allocations where possible

- In the long term consider a return to multi-annual funding which allows for greater planning and better value for money
- Provision of transitional funding for those that fail to be funded for future years
- Need for dedicated officers in some art forms such as dance and drama
- Implement system improvements identified from the internal review including definitions, simplifying the application process, There should be a level playing field across art forms with all commercial opportunities available to each form, address potential ICT issues, change processing of rejection letters, simplify Equality forms and use of appropriate ranking for multiartform applications

#### 8.4 Next Steps

- **For ACNI** – this report needs to be considered by ACNI and an action plan drawn up to confirm which of the recommendations can be addressed
- **For SIB** – As the recommendations are based on the requirements of the various stakeholders SIB will produce another report considering the main characteristics of the current AFP and also make comparisons with the equivalent schemes that are operated in the other UK countries and the Republic of Ireland. This will help validate some of the recommendations

# REVIEW OF THE ANNUAL FUNDING PROGRAMME (AFP) FOR THE ARTS COUNCIL OF NORTHERN IRELAND- STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

## APPENDICES

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**OCTOBER 2016**

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# APPENDIX 1: SURVEY OF AFP FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

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## 1. Overall Perceptions

Q1.	<b>How long have you been in contact or working with the Arts Council?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
	Less than 1 year	
	1-3 years	6
	4-6 years	3
	7-10 years	6
	More than 10 years	48
	Don't know	

Q2.	<b>We are interested in your <u>overall impressions</u>, how favourably or unfavourably do you regard the Arts Council?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
	Very favourably	23
	Mainly favourably	27
	Neither favourably nor unfavourably	8
	Mainly unfavourably	2
	Very unfavourably	1
	Don't know/No opinion	2

Q3.	<p><b>Which of these phrases best describes the way you would speak of the Arts Council to other people?</b></p> <p><i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i></p>	
	I would speak highly of the Arts Council without being asked	28
	I would speak highly of the Arts Council if I were asked	17
	I would be neutral towards the Arts Council	8
	I would be critical of the Arts Council if I were asked	7
	I would be critical of the Arts Council without being asked	0
	Don't know/No opinion	3

## 2. Work and Impact

Q4.	<b>Overall, how well or badly do you feel the Arts Council performs as an organisation?</b> <i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
	Very well	16
	Fairly well	30
	Neither well nor badly	11
	Fairly badly	3
	Very badly	1
	Don't know/No opinion	2

Q5.	<b>The Arts Council works to make great art accessible to everyone. Do you think that the effectiveness of the Arts Council in achieving this has got better, worse or stayed the same over the past year?</b> <i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
	Better	24
	Worse	11
	Stayed the same	21
	Don't know/No opinion	5

Q6.	<b>To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Arts Council makes a positive difference to arts and culture...</b>						
	<i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each of the options A to D.</i>						
		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/ No opinion
A	<b>...internationally</b>	10	21	18	8	1	5
B	<b>...in Northern Ireland</b>	33	26	1	1	1	0
C	<b>...in your region</b>	25	24	4	5	1	4
D	<b>...in your local area</b>	24	25	4	5	2	3

### 3. Working relationships

Q7.	<b>How often do you have contact with the Arts Council?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
More than once a week	1	
2-3 times a month	19	
About once a month	24	
Every 2-3 months	14	
Every 4-6 months	2	
At least once a year	2	

<b>Q8.</b>	<b>And how often would you ideally like to have contact with the Arts Council?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
	More than once a week	1
	2-3 times a month	21
	About once a month	21
	Every 2-3 months	16
	Every 4-6 months	2
	At least once a year	
	Less than once a year	
	Never	
	Don't know	2

<b>Q9.</b>	<b>How would you rate the quality of your working relationship with the Arts Council overall?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
	Very good	41
	Fairly good	14
	Neither good nor poor	4
	Fairly poor	2
	Very poor	1
	Don't know	1

Q10.	<p><b>What impact did the Arts Council’s relocation to Lisburn have on the quality of your working relationship with the organisation?</b></p> <p><i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an ‘X’</i></p>
------	---

Very adverse	1
Fairly adverse	13
Neither adverse or better	47
Slight improvement	0
Significant improvement	
Don’t know	2

Q11.	<p><b>Discounting any impact noted in Q10 (both adverse and better) do you think your working relationship with the Arts Council overall has improved or worsened over the last 12 months?</b></p> <p><i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an ‘X’</i></p>
------	---

Improved	17
Worsened	6
Stayed the same	40
Don’t know / No opinion	0

*If you selected ‘better’ in Q11, please answer Q11a. If you selected ‘worse’, please answer Q11b. If you answered ‘stayed the same’ or ‘don’t know / no opinion’, please move on to Q12.*

Q11a.	<b>Why do you say it has got better?</b> <i>Please select all that apply.</i>	
The Arts Council has got better at working in collaboration with partners	2	
I find the staff at the Arts Council helpful and supportive	17	
The Arts Council has got better at sharing appropriate and useful information	4	
The Arts Council has a better understanding of my/my organisation's aims	11	
The structure has improved my communication with the Arts Council	1	
The Arts Council is more open and honest	3	
I/my organisation have worked more closely with the Arts Council in the last year	10	
The Arts Council has a better understanding of my sector	10	
Other (please specify)		

Q11b.	<b>Why do you say it has got worse? Please select all that apply.</b>	
The Arts Council has got worse at working in collaboration with partners	2	
I do not find the staff at the Arts Council helpful or supportive	1	
The Arts Council does not share information well	2	
The Arts Council does not understand or share my/my organisation's aims	1	
There is no continuity of contact at the Arts Council	2	
The Arts Council's communication with me is poor	1	
I/my organisation have less contact with Arts Council staff	3	
The Arts Council does not understand my sector as well as it could	1	
Other (please specify)		



#### 4. Values and Behaviours

Q12.	<b>How well would you say you understand the Arts Council’s goals and priorities?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an ‘X’</i>	
Very well	31	
Fairly well	24	
Not very well	5	
Not at all well	1	
Don’t know/No opinion	2	

Q13.	<b>Thinking about the Arts Council’s work to make great art accessible everyone. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below? Please select either ‘strongly agree’, ‘tend to agree’, ‘neither agree nor disagree’, ‘tend to disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘don’t know / no opinion’ with an ‘X’ for each of the statements.</b>					
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don’t know / No opinion
The Arts Council uses its resources effectively to achieve its aims	8	31	10	9	2	1
The Arts Council has a strong sense of mission	17	31	6	8	1	0
The Arts Council has a clear plan or strategy to achieve its mission and goals	16	27	14	4	1	1
The Arts Council sets its goals and priorities based on	10	20	11	17	4	1

the needs of artists and arts and cultural organisations						
The Arts Council's goals and priorities are relevant to and will meet the needs of the wider public	9	28	16	7	2	1

Q14. **Which of the following groups do you think currently benefits most from the Arts Council's work?**

*Please rank the options in the table below from 1 to 4, where 1 benefits most and 4 benefits least.*

Artists	163
Cultural organisations	137
Government	144
The public	179

Q15. **Which of the following groups do you think should benefit most from the Arts Council's work?**

*Please rank the options in the table below from 1 to 4, where 1 should benefit most and 4 should benefit least.*

Artists	152
Cultural organisations	151
Government	145
The public	153

Q16.	<p><b>Thinking about how the Arts Council works to achieve its aims, indicate whether you think the Arts Council has a strong impact, some impact, limited impact, no impact or you don't know/have no opinion in response to the statements in the table below?</b></p> <p><i>Please select either 'strong impact', 'some impact', 'limited impact', 'no impact' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each of the statements.</i></p>				
	Strong impact	Some impact	Limited impact	No impact	Don't know/No opinion
Supporting and promoting excellence in arts and culture	26	25	12	0	1
Enabling more people to experience and be inspired by arts and culture	25	33	3	1	1
Enabling artistic talent to thrive	14	31	14	1	1
Supporting arts and cultural organisations to become more sustainable and resilient	12	24	19	7	1
Encouraging innovation and experimentation in arts and culture	14	24	19	5	1
Developing the knowledge and skills of arts and cultural leadership and workforce	11	22	24	5	1
Developing a more diverse arts and cultural leadership and workforce	7	22	24	7	3

Promoting arts and culture that reflect the diversity of contemporary Northern Ireland	19	30	11	1	2
Enabling every child and young person to have the opportunity to experience arts and culture	10	32	15	3	3
Encouraging greater public awareness of and enthusiasm about arts and culture	10	32	14	6	1
Ensuring access to knowledge and learning experiences for all	9	28	19	4	3

## 5. Openness

Q17.	<p><b>Thinking about how the Arts Council works as an organisation, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below?</b></p> <p><i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each of the statements.</i></p>					
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / No opinion
The Arts Council is open with its stakeholders and partners	15	28	7	7	4	2
The Arts Council is confident in making and defending decisions	11	30	13	6	1	2
The Arts Council is not afraid to challenge me or my organisation to help improvement	14	35	6	6	1	1
The Arts Council seeks feedback from its stakeholders and partners	16	27	7	7	2	2
I find it difficult to challenge the Arts Council if I do not agree with it	9	10	12	19	11	2
The Arts Council listens to and understands my views	15	29	7	6	3	3

## 6. Clarity and Communications

Q18.	Thinking about how the Arts Council engages and communicates with you and your organisation, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below? Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each of the statements.	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/No opinion
	The Arts Council does not really act as one organisation – I receive mixed messages depending on who I speak to	3	12	7	26	14	2
	The Arts Council is not always clear about what it stands for	2	11	17	22	10	1
	The Arts Council uses language that is inclusive and easy for others to understand	9	32	13	5	3	1
	The Arts Council's goals and priorities are clear and easy to understand	10	35	7	8	2	1
	I see the Arts Council as a first port of call for guidance and advice on funding	12	18	16	9	7	1
	The Arts Council is a useful source of intelligence and information that helps me to do my job better	10	21	19	6	6	1

Q19.	<p><b>How useful, if at all, do you find the following channels of communication for meeting your organisation’s needs?</b></p> <p><i>Please rate each of the options in the table below with 1 being ‘very useful’ and 5 being ‘not useful at all’.</i></p>						
	1 – Very useful	2	3	4	5 – Not useful at all	Don’t know/No opinion	Not applicable
Contact with staff at the Arts Council office	39	8	9	1	2	2	1
The Arts Council website and other digital and social media channels	12	24	16	8	2	1	
Networking or capacity building events	9	17	18	10	3	4	1

Q20.	<p><b>How well informed do you think the Arts Council keeps you about its work?</b></p> <p><i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an ‘X’</i></p>	
Very well informed	14	
Fairly well informed	38	
Not very well informed	9	
Not at all well informed	1	
Don’t know/No opinion	1	

Q21.	<b>Does the Arts Council supply you with enough, too little or too much information?</b> <i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
I receive the right amount of information	43	
I only receive a limited amount of information and I'd like more	13	
I receive more information than is useful to me	3	
Don't know/No opinion	3	

## 7. Respect

Q22.	<b>Thinking about your relationship with the Arts Council, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below?</b>  <i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each of the statements.</i>						
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / No opinion	
The partnership between me or my organisation and the Arts Council is based on mutual understanding and benefit	28	22	5	6	1	1	

I respect how the Arts Council goes about its work	21	26	8	5	2	1
The Arts Council makes bold decisions in the interests of the arts and culture in Northern Ireland	8	24	15	12	3	1
I have confidence in the current leadership of the Arts Council	20	18	15	6	3	1

## 8. Partnership

Q23.	<b>Thinking about how the Arts Council relates to other organisations working to support the arts and culture, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below?</b>					
	<i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each of the statements.</i>					
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/No opinion
The Arts Council knows how to work with partners from outside the arts and cultural sector	7	20	19	5	1	10
The Arts Council understands the impact of its work and funded activity on other policy areas outside of arts and culture	9	24	16	4	1	9

The Arts Council is not very good at working collaboratively towards shared objectives	1	5	19	22	8	8
The Arts Council is able to broker and facilitate relationships between my organisation and others	9	16	17	15	2	5
The Arts Council has improved its partnerships with stakeholders and national partners, and these benefit the arts and culture sectors	4	17	21	5	3	13

## 9. Accountability and Trust

Q24.	<p><b>The Arts Council is a public body which invests public money in the arts. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below?</b></p> <p><i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each of the statements.</i></p>					
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/No opinion
The Arts Council's decisions are clearly linked to its vision and goals	14	27	11	7	1	3

The Arts Council explains its investment decisions poorly	3	10	24	14	8	4
The Arts Council's decisions are informed by sound evidence	8	20	23	6	1	5
The Arts Council holds the organisations it funds properly to account	28	23	4	7	0	1
The Arts Council finds it difficult to show the value of its investments	4	17	11	22	6	4
The Arts Council is aware of the future challenges and opportunities for the arts and culture in Northern Ireland	27	20	8	3	1	4

Q25.	<p><b>The Arts Council seeks to be a trusted stakeholder within the arts and cultural sector. With this in mind, to what extent do you trust the Arts Council?</b></p> <p><i>Please select either ‘a great deal’, ‘a fair amount’, ‘not very much’, ‘not at all’ or ‘don’t know / no opinion’ with an ‘X’ for each action in the table below.</i></p>				
	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	Not at all	Don't know/No opinion
To uphold the arms-length principle. This means making funding decisions which are independent of government.	22	27	10	3	1
To invest to support Northern Ireland’s arts and culture ecology in an intelligent way. This means making the best possible use of its resources to fund arts and culture across Northern Ireland.	21	28	9	2	1
To make the case for public funding of arts and culture. This means acting as a strong advocate for the arts and culture sector.	26	24	10	2	1
To bring people together and see connections and opportunities. This means helping people across the sector to work together.	14	27	18	2	2



Q26.	<p><b>The Arts Council operates a range of funding and monitoring processes. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below?</b></p> <p><i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each statement.</i></p>					
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/No opinion
The Arts Council collects the right amount of data from funded organisations and projects	12	29	7	12	2	1
The Arts Council makes good use of the data it collects from funded organisations and projects	3	22	12	14	4	8
The Arts Council's funding application process is less complicated than other funders	4	18	12	20	8	1
The Arts Council is not flexible or responsive in its approach to funding	3	15	13	22	8	1
The process of applying for funding is bureaucratic and prohibitive	6	14	15	20	6	2
I understand what funding is available for different activities	26	28	5	3		1



Q27.	<p><b>Thinking about your most recent experience of applying for Annual Funding, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below?</b></p> <p><i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each statement.</i></p>					
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/No opinion
The eligibility criteria to apply for funding are clearly explained and easy to understand	23	35	1	3		1
The application form for my funding programme was clear and easy to complete	17	31	4	10	2	0
There was sufficient advice and information available to help me complete the application process	21	33	6	2	1	1
Any advice or information I received during the application process was timely, informative and helpful	23	28	7	0	1	4
My application was dealt with in an efficient, fair and timely manner	23	25	10	2	1	2
The decision-making process for funding awards is fair and transparent	17	24	11	1	6	0

## 10. Programme for Government

Q28.	<b>The new Programme for Government (PfG) sets out how government funding will be used to deliver various outcomes. Which of the outcomes do you consider your organisation will contribute to most?</b> <i>Please rank the options in the table below from 1 to 10, where 1 contributes most and 10 contributes least.</i>	
	Rank (1-10)	
Prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy	419	
Have a more equal society	356	
Enjoy long, healthy, active lives	361	
Are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential	137	
Have more people working in better jobs	459	
Have a safer community where we respect the law and each other	482	
Have a shared society that respects diversity	273	
Are a confident, welcoming, outward-looking society	253	
Have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest	224	
Give our children and young people the best start in life	271	

Q29.	<p><b>The Programme for Government has identified many indicators that can be used to measure how well outcomes are being delivered. Which of these indicators do you think could be used to indicate the value of the service your organisation is delivering?</b></p> <p><i>Please select all that apply</i></p>	
	1.Reduce health inequality	16
	2. Increase healthy life expectancy	22
	3. Reduce preventable deaths	9
	4. Improve the quality of the healthcare experience	11
	5. Improve support for looked after children	22
	6. Improve educational outcomes	39
	7.Reduce educational inequality	33
	8. Improve the quality of education	41
	9. Improve the skills profile of the population	34
	10. Improve child development	36
	11. Increase the proportion of people in work	25
	12.Reduce economic inactivity	21
	13.Increase the proportion of people working in good jobs	19
	14.Increase the size of the economy	23

15. Increase the competitiveness of the economy	21
16. Increase innovation in our economy	31
17. Increase respect for each other	57
18. Improve cultural participation	60
19. Increase the confidence and capability of people and communities	59
20. Improve our attractiveness as a destination	47
21. Increase shared space	43
22. Increase reconciliation	45
23. Improve our international reputation	54
24. Increase the proportion of graduates moving into employment or on to further study	23
25. Increase quality of life for people with disabilities	44

## 11.Future priorities

1.

Q30.	<b>Thinking about the next 12 months, what are the most important things for the Arts Council to continue doing?</b> <i>Please rank the options in the table below from 1 to 10, where 1 denotes most important and 10 least important.</i>	
	Rank (1-10)	
Continued investment	136	
Ensuring that its investment across Northern Ireland is distributed in a fair and more geographically balanced way	372	
Supporting and nurturing organisations	187	
Supporting and nurturing artists	223	
Making the case for investment in the arts and culture	168	
Arts Council staff to maintain regular and open communication with me/my organisation	395	
Provide expertise and specialist advice and intelligence about arts and culture	452	
Being transparent about decision-making	456	
Continuing to improve its operational efficiency	464	
Supporting more collaboration across the arts and cultural sector	419	

Q31.	<p><b>And thinking about the next 12 months, what do you think the Arts Council needs to change most to improve its service to you or your organisation?</b></p> <p><i>Please rank the options in the table below from 1 to 7, where 1 denotes change most and 7 change least.</i></p>	
	Rank (1-7)	
More personal contact with Arts Council staff	258	
Better and clearer communication with Arts Council staff	238	
Better and clearer advice on funding	202	
Listen to me/my organisation more	196	
Change the way it funds activity	183	
Better at partnership and collaboration	189	
Provide more information about its work	269	

## APPENDIX 2

# 25 CONSOLIDATED RESPONSES FROM AFP FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

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### **Overall Impressions on ACNI Staff**

We are satisfied with the excellent service provided by the personnel with whom we have contact and with the processes.

Our organisation has an excellent relationship with our Arts Officer and Assistant Officer. They are aware of the need of our organisation and the sector. They engage with what we are doing and listen to what the needs of the sector are and how we might jointly work with them to solve them. I am confident that they are both strong advocates for our work balancing our needs with those of their other clients.

I have always had an excellent relationship with my Arts Council officers and I see it as a relationship, where both parties work together to achieve both parties objectives.

The personal relationship with the ACNI representative is a positive one. I believe the Arts Development Officer in general understands our situation and is supportive.

We have maintained a good working relationship with ACNI who in turn have provided support and assistance to ensure the centre continues to support artists by providing a residential workplace available to artists throughout the year.

I think that the Arts Council is doing an excellent job in a challenging economy to maintain arts organisations through their funding, providing a richness and texture to the cultural life throughout Northern Ireland without which the unique talents and experiences of all the people of N. Ireland both residents and visitors would suffer

From a personal level the staff I have dealt with have been very helpful in regards to reminders about deadlines, and providing information. They are supportive to the work we do as a studio provider and often attend our exhibitions and events.

I think it absolutely needs to be acknowledged that the Arts Council – in spite of the most challenging funding climate I can remember and what seems to be an overwhelming lack of support for or understanding of the role the arts plays in any progressive or healthy society on the part of our government – have done a truly remarkable job. And nowhere is this truer than in our direct dealings with our Arts Officer and Assistant Arts Officer. They couldn't have been better and have been supportive, understanding and a pleasure to work with throughout.

We have enjoyed a very good and professional relationship with the ACNI for many years, and indeed I would go as far as to say that the ACNI's support over the years had developed the as an organisation, its staff and our activities (and subsequent beneficiaries) more so than any other funder we have worked with. Staff and the leadership of the ACNI have always come out in support of our work and have been on hand to provide support, encouragement, advice etc whenever requested.

Over the years I've worked with the Arts Council they have become more open with and trusting of our organisation. Similar to all organisations who are government funded they are subject to the vagaries of Government policy and funding. However we believe that they use the money wisely and they have become more streamlined and efficient.

Our organisation has had a very positive relationship with the Arts Council for many years – not just in terms of funding but also in terms of excellent support from a succession of officers - and we recognise the very difficult circumstances in which it operates.

My opinion is tainted by the fact that we have just come through a three month process of a review following the announcement of a cut in April which was overturned in June. Following this experience the Arts Council, to us, are a group of different relationships most of which are very positive but some of which have been confusing and caused us to have a negative outlook on the way the Arts Council operates.

### **Equality Considerations**

The only area of frustration is in the mandatory equality monitoring process - this feels like a box ticking exercise based on traditional assumptions and cannot accurately record the sector's performance because there are not always options offered to reflect the contemporary artist/organisation's make-up. I think this model of monitoring equality is outmoded and intrusive. Northern Ireland has a history of embedded discrimination and of being asked to reveal religious/political/gender information for various reasons - might it be time to provide a new, less onerous model which reflects the changing society in which we live and allows for the fact that today many people/organisations are not aware of what religion/political opinion anyone holds nor whether they have dependents or not, or what is their age or sexual orientation – and there is no reason to enquire.

### **Implications of Budget Cuts on ACNI Relationship and Artists**

The funding constraints do put the delivery of this relationship under pressure for both sides. Neither the Arts Council nor my organisation can continue to deliver well while funding decreases.

Its vital investment is continued – the relatively short-term gains from reactive cuts (which in the grand scheme of things making little difference to the big government picture) are placing innovation, highly respected excellent public services and cultural economic growth at risk, and this is short-sighted. NI punches above its weight culturally internationally, this won't continue without proper resourcing at grassroots level.

Organisations and artists have been doing it tough for a long time now without the safety net that ACNI staff as public sector employees have. These needs to be recognised and addressed and the staff within the sector need support and understanding. Sometimes doing more for less has a critical point where it just 'breaks' the structures that are there. We are not too far from this happening in quite a number of areas. There doesn't seem to be a way to communicate that reality without it sounding like a whine for more money. There are now serious concerns for the health and wellbeing of workers in the sector who have been absorbing the impact of the cuts between government and the client base.

#### **Location of ACNI Office**

It would be great to see the Arts Council move back to Belfast considering so many of their clients are based in the city. This would not only make arranging meetings far easier but I believe having a presence in the capital city is very important as it is a reflection on the relevance of the arts in our society. Artist led organisations such as galleries, studios etc provide a cultural hub which affords artists a viable reason to remain living, working and contributing to Northern Ireland's economy. Most artist led organisations depend on a huge voluntary contribution in order to keep afloat, we need to professionalise the sector by providing paid work and ensuring all artists are paid. Hopefully ACNI can continue to contribute to this as their support is paramount to the longevity of these organisations

Whilst the use of The Sidings as an HQ for the Arts Council has very little impact on our organisation, If the Arts Council wish to project a positive progressive image to the N.Ireland public and also internationally, then serious consideration needs to be given to the type and location of their HQ.

#### **Role of ACNI**

The organisation as a whole does seem to have very real issues in engaging with the sector. I understand that this is a tricky balance given that as funders, they do have to maintain a slight separation but I think that this goes too far. There is much that could be achieved by closer and more collaborative working with the sector that could generate really creative solutions addressing the needs of the sector. It is hard to answer some of these questions in relation in funding because obviously levels of funding from the Executive have led to cuts to organisations delivering activity. Perhaps embracing change and innovation within the sector and reenergising the sector is one way to strengthen the case for increasing that support gain. Taking control of our situations rather than waiting for the next round of cuts. The sector works on

delivery, day after day and are a huge font of ideas and information that could bring about this change. ACNI does not have to come up with these ideas all by themselves. We might be able to do some of that together without harming the funder/fundee relationship. New ideas don't always cost more money. And the more interaction that there is, the more understanding each party becomes of the needs of the other and the more support that one can have for the other.

I want to strongly confirm our support for the arms-length funding principle as the most essential element to successful evidence-based decision-making regarding funding in the arts. Ministers of all persuasions in NI have been extraordinarily prone to making funding decisions that are fundamentally in their own party political interests and that runs contrary to the most effective use of limited resources to the sector that benefits the people of Northern Ireland as a whole. Given this history, it is vital that the arms-length funding principle be vigorously defended despite real problems regarding ACNI's relationship with sector and the need for ACNI to reinvigorate itself.

The ACNI has transformed its self significantly over the past twenty years. Much of the change has been at the behest of changing Government priorities as opposed to changes/demands in the arts sector. As lead agency for the arts it may need to engage more successfully with local politicians to encourage a better understanding of the importance of culture in a healthy society. It must take every opportunity to argue for sustained and increased funding of the arts and artists as the foundation for any of the social gains the arts can provide – which are many and have been documented. 'Proof' in the form of statistics and percentages only go so far in explaining what the arts actually do. The ACNI has to tell a better story, perhaps by bringing politicians to the arts organisations they fund and asking the groups to give an overview of what they do plus some testimonial from real people who have benefitted from those activities. This would suit the 'concrete' consciousness of those who are used to making decisions based on emotional investment as opposed to objective facts. I.e. our partisan politicians

### **AFP Process**

ACNI as an organisation fails to demonstrate that it understands the specific challenges faced by arts organisations working in a rural context. This is demonstrated in the extremely unbalanced funding allocations across rural and urban areas in NI. In addition it fails to demonstrate that it recognises the needs of our particular sector (Dance). This has been demonstrated (and continues to be so) by a number of funding decisions that do not benefit the sector as a whole.

Regarding changes to the funding structures, I would advocate for a return to multi-annual funding as it allows for greater planning and ultimately far greater value for money for ACNI. We in the Arts Sector are very capable of creating collaborations ourselves, not just at a local level but internationally, thus pooling

resources and bring investment into NI. Multiannual funding allows this to happen. If you don't know if you're going to be funded from one year to the next – it renders this very difficult.

It should also be mentioned only finding out if you're going to get funded or cut at the most a month before the new financial year starts is extremely challenging and if this could be improved upon it would make life a lot easier.

We are supportive and would be keen to maintain an arm's length development body for the arts. We cannot fault the Development Workers and some of the senior staff for their support. However they are working under serious pressure upholding complicated and an onerous funding bureaucracy. It would be better if they had time to engage with us more as partners. We could help build a very exciting sector.

I believe there is limited constructive conversation between the annually funded organisations and ACNI in relation to the strategic development of sectors.

There is in our experience again limited interaction between ACNI funded organisations and local district council offices and this is something that ACNI could support the facilitation of. In the context within which we work there is an opportunity to utilise the skills and experience of the annually funded organisation to inform the discourse on the role of arts within local communities and the organisations are too busy fighting for their survival to undertake this battle ACNI could support this.

ACNI has increased its supporting in the development of the international links however NI is seriously lacking support in this area in comparison to the rest of Ireland and the UK. We are falling behind and missing out on opportunities.

The fact that ACNI does not have a dedicated Dance Officer and a separate dedicated Drama Officer also has a major impact on the development of the sector in Northern Ireland. Regardless of the positive work undertaken by the current Dance and Drama Officer it is common sense and inevitable that the development of either sector will be compromised by not having a dedicated officer.

In order to effect change in the dance sector I feel ACNI (including board members and senior management) needs to engage in an honest and open debate with key players in the dance community. It needs to take radical funding decisions for medium to long-term change not short term. It also needs to work with the sector and other statutory bodies to inform the debate on the role arts have in education, health, community development

We do find the funding process onerous and forward planning difficult with only single-year funding available It would be very helpful for organisations with proven track records to have a less time-consuming and bureaucratic process

There needs to be 3 Year Funding as 1 Year Funding makes it difficult for an Arts Organisation to plan and is not very productive.

Regarding the way the Arts Council has worked in recent years, I think at times there has been a lack of clarity in the funding process. With regard to the AFP application process, we have received conflicting advice regarding the inclusion of Business, Marketing Plans etc where it was articulated that they were not necessary yet a look at the Scoring Criteria clearly indicated that their absence would greatly endanger funding.

Many of the issues around the Arts Council NI's support to arts and cultural organisations and to artists are linked to the short term funding cycles they themselves face from allocation of Exchequer funds from Government. Resilience and stability of arts organisations would improve if there were longer lead in times in regard to funding decisions and if funding cycles were more longer term i.e. 3 year rather than one year. This would enhance long term planning and stabilise core staffing within arts organisations, which would in turn impact positively on fundraising and income diversification capacity, allowing more focus and longer lead in times on programming and fundraising asks.

Collaboration across funders of the Arts to streamline information being asked off funded clients could further reduce bureaucracy and resources needed around reporting.

In the climate of reducing public funding there is a need to improve our case for the Arts and the impacts of the Arts across the PfG outcomes and society. Increased collaboration across the sector and more leadership from Arts Council NI in helping to build this case, the necessary evidence base and a positive campaign for the Arts would be invaluable, but everyone working within the Arts in Northern Ireland has a responsibility to work together on this important area

The general feeling from me and my colleagues in the North West is that Arts Council funding is not distributed evenly or fairly across Northern Ireland. 80% of its revenue funding is directed to organisations based in, or working in Belfast, with the same 5 or 6 organisations receiving the bulk of this funding. They are funded time and again whether they meet Arts Council's aims or not and appear to operate under different rules from the rest of us in that they:

Receive uplifts in funding while the rest of us receive cuts or are on standstill,

Receive deficit funding when they have been poorly managed,

Have access to capital funding (or funding is made available for remedial works on buildings) and

Are supported indirectly with events being directed exclusively to their venues

One of the biggest issues for the ACNI is the obvious disparity of funding across N.Ireland. Nearly 82% of last year's annual funding went to the Belfast area, leaving a very small spread of funding for the rest of N.Ireland. Look at the number of organisations that get £500k+ receiving funding and you will find that they are all located in Belfast, even though Derry for example was the first UK City of Culture.

Secondly, any audit on annual ACNI funding would highlight the imbalance generally of how organisations are funded, and why organisations that the ACNI really can't afford to fund like the Ulster Orchestra, are still being funded. Nothing against the Orchestra, but the small size of the population of N.Ireland, the lack of arts funding, makes the Arts Sector query why the ACNI hasn't made the obvious decision to cut them completely, which should have been made many years ago. Nearly 1/5 of the entire ACNI Annual grant aid goes to them.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is doing great work considering the reduction in staff they have experienced over the last year. It would be advantageous to have more face to face contact with arts officers so that they are informed and up to date on the day to day challenges of arts organisations and artists, hopefully there will be an increase in staff in 2017 that can enable this to happen.

Given the recent media coverage of the lack of investment in the arts, and the public show of support for the Arts by some of our most prominent politicians and political parties, I hope the ACNI is successful in its upcoming meeting(s) with the Minister responsible for the Arts in securing much needed, and deserved funding. That way the ACNI will be on a position to invest additional funding. I also believe the ACNI should not necessarily focus on ensuring funding is spread evenly on a geographical basis. I am a firm believer in supporting organisations that deliver value for money, improved access and opportunity to the arts, sustained growth and mutual outcomes, and benefit those people the ACNI is aiming to support regardless of where they are located.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland should be better funded to do the work that needs to be done. There are not enough staff/resources.

ACNI needs to be more strategic with its funding decisions – It currently funds too many organisations with small amounts of money doing reasonably similar things. Fewer funded organisations that are better funded. There should be more information about what the Arts Organisations did with their funding. Perhaps their Annual Reports should appear on the ACNI website...

There should be different requirements for funding for different sizes of Arts Organisations.

Currently a very small Arts Organisation is required to complete the same application procedures and maintain the same governance and reporting structures as very large Arts Organisations. We should not be frightened of supporting excellence.

Art should not be regarded as a form of social engineering. There needs to be an Arts Council of Northern Ireland as it has the best understanding of the Arts Sector in Northern Ireland. It needs to remain independent from local/regional/national government.

There should be a level playing field for Art forms. Theatre and Music are allowed to sell tickets – Visual Arts should be allowed to sell Visual Art without impunity.

### **Criticism of ACNI**

It is a matter of concern that the Arts Council does not understand the economic principles that underpin our business model. The Arts Council has not sought to inform itself about how we work. That is to say the Arts Council does not understand the business realities which affect the organisation such as the economic reality facing us. This links to the Arts Council's ability to make appropriately informed investment decisions about our organisation.

The Arts Council has reacted to the reduction in the funds available to it with a lack of strategic decision-making. This is evidenced by its decision to (mainly) proportionately reduce its funding to almost all its clients. This policy which the Arts Council has deployed for many years has resulted in a dangerously fragile and beleaguered arts sector in which those clients who receive arts funding have been funded to an inadequate level for many years thereby jeopardising individual organisations' sustainability as well as the resilience of the sector as a whole.

The creation of excellent work in NI - that is to say work that contributes significantly to achieving a large number of key outcomes articulated as desirable in the PfG - has been under threat for years due to key organisations' longstanding lack of adequate financial resource. Creative excellence is also almost impossible to deliver in a macro-climate in which insecurity and fear are prevalent. This has been exacerbated by the Arts Council's unwillingness to make strategic funding decisions that would result in the closure of some poorly performing organisations thereby allowing it to make appropriate levels of investment in high performing arts organisations (across all sectors including community-based organisations).

The Arts Council's funding strategy has resulted in an arts sector in which every arts organisation lacks structural resilience and is constrained in its ability to deliver the outcomes it is funded to deliver, never mind increasing the sector's impact across all PfG indicators which would be entirely deliverable if a smaller sector was appropriately funded. The Arts Council has not created collaborative and supportive relationships with its clients,

Every autumn (which is the busiest season for every arts organisation in the world) our resources are stretched to breaking point in order to complete the every-changing annual Arts Council application

process. Last year's submission was many pages (excluding the documents uploaded to the Government Funding Website). Our organisation creates a year-round arts programme across almost every art form and we fill in the same application as a small independent theatre company that produces work twice each year. We fully appreciate and accept that a significant grant warrants a significant investment of time and effort but as we a very similar grant each year there appears to be no relationship at all between the quality of the applications we submit and the level of grant we receive. This suggests that the weeks of effort across almost every organisation to submit the best possible application is not a good use of time.

Ultimately the responsibility for the situation presided over by the Arts Council is at least equally shared by the behaviours of our politicians and Civil Service. This means that any strategy to increase the impact of public money invested in arts and culture in order to increase the economic, cultural and social health of Northern Ireland will only succeed if transformative change occurs far beyond the purview of the Arts Council.

The Arts Council, like most organisations, has moments of exemplary action and moments of unsatisfactory action, staff that are fantastic and staff that are less so.

### **Assessment of Value of the Application**

The promotion of excellent art, building capacity within organisations and supporting artists must be at the top of the agenda. It is clear from the RFO which is primarily concerned at numbers, be they gender orientation, political opinion, religious background that this in fact is the priority, however it is well nigh impossible to provide fully accurate information at this level regarding audiences. We are not asked any more about our body of work to anything like the degree we used to be, critical and audience feedback – surely an indicator of its impact, a secondary consideration only. This is unfortunate and it is backed up in the programme for government where there is little or no mention of the arts being a priority in that it is a reflection of the society we live in. Across the UK and Europe governments are investing more not less in the arts because they recognise the value of a creative

Society with a healthy arts economy. In Northern Ireland, it is the opposite. I must reiterate, I am not, in any way holding ACNI responsible for this, they are doing their best in response to the government's quite frankly appalling treatment of the arts, but it is responsive and I think the approach must be more proactive. The Arts do not exist to prolong life, reduce health inequality, and increase reconciliation. The Arts are the cultural expression of our society and with greater investment, can certainly enhance these things, but primarily will result in the development of works of art of the finest quality in theatre, opera, dance, music, visual arts that enhance the lives of people living here and draw positive attention from across the world.

The reality is the Arts Council is a very good organisation and one which we need. Its arms length status protects the sector from the capricious inclinations of whatever administration is currently in place, but we all need to work together to raise awareness of the benefits of the arts – not just at a community level or a tourism level, but to society as a whole. Greater investment is required – the Arts budget for NI in total is less than the Republic of Ireland's Theatre budget at the height of austerity. Ongoing cuts and standstill awards have stymied progression, halted innovation and resulted in a massive talent drain from NI. Standstill funding since 2011 actually represents a significant cut at this point. As an organisation we have sourced funding – large amounts of it from Europe and from a wide variety of Trusts and Foundations who recognise the value and impact of our work, however that argument is increasingly hard to make as year on year the lack of investment from our government becomes ever more apparent. We, both the sector and Arts Council must address this.

So to sum up, we have found the Arts Council to be a very supportive ally. They have withstood a lot of challenges in recent times. For us, the changes we would recommend include a stronger focus on arts organisations that provide ongoing employment, training and development for artists, artists themselves and these needs to be ACNI's top priority. Accessibility is of course very important – but to what? Further cuts to the arts, ongoing standstill funding (which represents a cut taking inflation into account) will result in highly experienced practitioners all necessary to the creation of excellent art having to move away or into other sectors in order to survive. In the case of young and emerging artists it means emigration. This results in far less choice and lesser production values. So greater investment in the arts is necessary and that has got to be central to any funding decisions, because the creation of excellent art that changes lives in a myriad of ways and has a wide range of secondary benefits is the rationale for an Arts Council and public funding for the arts

The Arts Council NI has been a huge supporter both financially and artistically to us for more than twenty years, the officers are very hard working above and beyond their working day. It is vital that the Arts Council NI continues to exist as an organisation, as it is an invaluable resource for the future of Arts and Culture in Northern Ireland. To have security in the knowledge that ACNI will continue to exist would be beneficial to our organisation going forward.

The ongoing under-investment in the arts compounded by the current cuts to arts funding threatens us all and the repercussion is that everybody is fearful. It seems also that the Arts Council's role in administering the public and lottery funds has become all-consuming to the detriment of them championing, advocating for and promoting the arts and the work of their funded clients – both publically and within government, at a regional, national and international level and this has perhaps skewed the “power balance” between the “funder” and the organisations that are delivering their strategy, aims and mission on the ground.

I hope the 360 degree feedback approach can be used constructively, perhaps through benchmarking against the performance satisfaction ratings of similar public sector bodies. Personally, I would be more interested in a benchmarking exercise against other arts councils in the UK and Ireland, that might demonstrate the truth or otherwise of the following commentary, which I have heard repeated many times in conversations with colleagues across the sector:

- i) That the Arts Council's available subsidy to distribute per head of population is at an unrealistically low level, relative to other Arts Councils
- ii) That Arts Council support is distributed across far too many clients, particularly AFP but also through its Project funds, diluting its impact
- iii) That Arts Council overheads and staff numbers are far too high, relative to the level of funding distributed
- iv) That the Arts Council manages far too many funding streams that would offer better value and be more efficient consolidated.

ACNI's day-to-day performance, on which the survey focuses, is in my experience neither better nor worse than others, sharing similar strengths and weaknesses. Since 2013 however there has been a marked weakening of strategic direction, as annual rather than multi-year funding AFP agreements have become entrenched as the norm. When I started in NI in 2012, it was a requirement of every AFP client to produce both a corporate and business plan, to be submitted as part of AFP. Whilst this required significant work on the part of the client, support seminars were arranged and as good practise, this seemed well ahead of the curve I had observed elsewhere in the UK funding system. Sadly, all this has vanished, along it seems with the Arts Council's own belief in its strategic planning and long-term prospects.

Currently, Arts Council's lack of confidence in its own support base within government is disabling it from performing an essential function of leadership – to offer hope. Its executive offers no more heartening prospect to its clients than a best case survival mode, extended indefinitely. This is not a sustainable basis for progress, nor will it provide a stable platform for the sector it is attempting to lead.

Arts Council means well and gives the impression of doing its best in difficult circumstances. It is however in urgent, long overdue need of the kind of wholesale overhaul that has taken place elsewhere amongst UK Arts funders. Many of its practises and structures are 10 or 20 years out of date – even its font seems left over from the old Arts Council of Great Britain, disbanded in the early 1990's! Without a thoroughgoing restructuring and repurposing of the organisation it is hard to see how it can ever really thrive or sustain the arts sector in Northern Ireland, though the fear would be that any attempt at reform in the current climate would be used by those in government with no love of the arts to serve their own purposes

Our relationship with the arts council is a very strong one and any criticism that appears within this document is mainly derived from the point of the lack of investment in the Arts through the constant cutting of Arts Council budgets on an annual basis, hampering the opportunities for truly innovative, strategic thinking.

For example on q13 – we have noted that we tend to disagree with the statement that the Arts Council sets its goals and priorities based on the needs of artists and arts and cultural basis. While we believe that they do this as best they can the constant cutting of resources, which is beyond their control, means consistently having to realign their priorities in year.

In question 24 we have noted that we agree that ACNI finds it difficult to show the value of its investments – however this is true of most arms' length funding agencies and we welcome the move towards Outcome Based evidence gathering we have experienced in the past number of months.

While we understand the limitations placed on the ACNI regarding when decisions can be announced for the AFP it should be noted that other ALB's with similar limitations are at least able to issue letters of comfort to currently funded organisations stating that, should their application be unsuccessful, their funding is secure for at least a 3-month period beyond the decision announcement, thus ensuring that no one is receiving this news days before their current contract expires. A similar approach could be used by ACNI.

Q54 the quality of response which I can offer in this questionnaire is limited in that I have only held the position of Director since July 2015. We have however maintained a long term funding relationship with ACNI. I would like to stress however that since my appointment my experience with the traditional arts/music support structure and personnel has been proactive & supportive.

My overall impression is that sustained funding, strategic investment and the valuing of the arts beyond economic benefits by government are needed in order that ACNI can deliver an effective arts development plan.

In order to more effectively contribute to the wider issues raised, it has occurred to me that an annual briefing gathering would be useful, with the opportunity to understand the various sectors and to network with ACNI staff and the arts communities.

As Project Artistic Director during the 2015-16 time period specified, I feel there has been a strong level of support from ACNI for our new team and new model of working, along with our innovative ideas for the future. I have appreciated the opportunity to build a good relationship with the Arts Council

1 – The bi annual meetings for annually funded clients are very valuable, I feel that this is a wonderful

Opportunity to get feedback from the Arts Council sector head to discuss strategic aims of my

Organisation. I welcome them and I think they are essential in keeping good, open communication with the sector.

2 – My organisation benefits from the accessory reports which are forwarded on with regard to events we are hosting or partnering on. These are essential in evaluating if these events are engaging the public with the music we are representing.

3 – It would be wonderful if the AF online application was a more up to date system.

4 – It would be wonderful if there were additional funds which annually funded clients could access apart from touring funding and small grants.

5 – My organisation would appreciate more networking opportunities for the music sector

It is important that the arts continue to be funded at arm's-length from Govt and this principle has been under severe pressure in recent times putting ACNI in a very challenging position caught between DCAL and the sector. This aligned with cuts which were particularly severe in 15-16 and were also potentially going to occur mid-year, has contributed to often difficult relationships between ACNI and the sector. Trust and open relationships are built by people not organisations, within ACNI there are people who deliver on building these relationships effectively and within appropriate client/funder context.

However there is still often a parent/child dynamic which comes from a similar dynamic being created between DCAL (as was) and ACNI. Leadership, partnership and collaboration are vital if the sector is to flourish and meet the very real challenges of the next PfG and budget. It feels like a renewed emphasis on these between ACNI and Govt and the sector as part of a functioning ecosystem focussed on delivering arts that inspires, engages and involves all people in NI is what is needed. How this happens needs to be co-designed by all involved.

In addition audiences/visitors/participants don't categorise themselves as organisations are categorised. The museum and heritage sector, the sports sector, the screen sector, libraries, all have synergies and crossover audiences with the arts. We are missing opportunities if the new Dept doesn't support greater collaboration with those organisations.

Finally the role and voice of the audience is also important. Too often challenging times makes arts organisations look inward. The sector as a whole needs to place the voice of audiences more centrally within its planning and delivery from Govt, through ACNI to individual artists and organisations

## APPENDIX 3: SURVEY OF APPLICANTS FOR ACNI'S AFP WHO WERE UNSUCCESSFUL

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### 12.Funding Status

<b>Q1.</b>	<b>Have you made any unsuccessful applications to the Arts Council under the Annual Funding Programme (AFP) in the last five years?</b>	
	<i>Please indicate each year you made an unsuccessful application from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
2011/12	0	
2012/13	1	
2013/14	1	
2014/15	0	
2015/16	2	

<b>Q2.</b>	<b>If you made an unsuccessful application to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below, otherwise please go to Q3?</b>					
	<i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each statement.</i>					
	Strongly	Tend to	Neither agree nor	Tend to	Strongly	Don't know/No

	agree	agree	disagree	disagree	disagree	opinion
The eligibility criteria to apply for funding were clearly explained and easy to understand		3				
The application form for my funding programme was clear and easy to complete		3				
There was sufficient advice and information available to help me complete the application process		1		1	1	
Any advice or information I received during the application process was timely, informative and helpful		1		1	1	
My application was dealt with in an efficient, fair and timely manner		1	1		1	
The decision-making process for funding awards is fair and transparent and I understand why my application was unsuccessful					3	
I could find alternative sources of Arts Council funding			1	1	1	
I could find alternative sources of funding elsewhere			1	1	1	

<b>Q3.</b>	<b>Have you made any successful applications to the Arts Council under the AFP in the in the previous four years but not last year?</b>	
	<i>Please indicate each year you made a successful application from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
2011/12		1
2012/13		1
2013/14		2
2014/15		1

<b>Q4.</b>	<b>If you made a successful application to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below, otherwise please go to Q5?</b>						
	<i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each statement.</i>						
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/No opinion	
		2					
	The eligibility criteria to apply for funding were clearly explained and easy to understand						
	The application form for my funding programme was clear and easy to complete		2				
	There was sufficient advice and information available to		2				

help me complete the application process						
Any advice or information I received during the application process was timely, informative and helpful		2				
My application was dealt with in an efficient, fair and timely manner		2				
The decision-making process for funding awards is fair and transparent		1			1	
I did not apply in 2015/16 because I no longer require funding					2	
I did not apply in 2015/16 because I have alternative sources of funding available					2	

### 13.Overall Perceptions

Q5.	<b>How long have you been in contact with the Arts Council?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
	Less than 1 year	
	1-3 years	
	4-6 years	1
	7-10 years	
	More than 10 years	2
	Don't know	

Q6.	<b>We are interested in your <u>overall impressions</u>. How favourably or unfavourably do you regard the Arts Council?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
	Very favourably	1
	Mainly favourably	1
	Neither favourably nor unfavourably	
	Mainly unfavourably	1
	Very unfavourably	
	Don't know/No opinion	

<b>Q7.</b>	<b>Which of these phrases best describes the way you would speak of the Arts Council to other people?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
	I would speak highly of the Arts Council without being asked	1
	I would speak highly of the Arts Council if I were asked	
	I would be neutral towards the Arts Council	
	I would be critical of the Arts Council if I were asked	2
	I would be critical of the Arts Council without being asked	
	Don't know/No opinion	

**14.Impact**

<b>Q8.</b>	<b>Overall, how well or badly do you feel the Arts Council performs as an organisation?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
	Very well	1
	Fairly well	1
	Neither well nor badly	
	Fairly badly	1
	Very badly	
	Don't know/No opinion	

Q9.	<p><b>The Arts Council works to make great art accessible to everyone. Do you think that the effectiveness of the Arts Council in achieving this has got better, worse or stayed the same over the past year?</b></p> <p><i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i></p>	
Better	1	
Worse	2	
Stayed the same		
Don't know/No opinion		

Q10.	<p><b>To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Arts Council makes a positive difference to arts and culture...</b></p> <p><i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each of the options A to D.</i></p>						
		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/ No opinion
A	<b>...internationally</b>					1	2
B	<b>...in Northern Ireland</b>	2	1				
C	<b>...in your region</b>	1	1	1			
D	<b>...in your local area</b>	1		1		1	

## 15. Working relationships

Q11.	<b>How often do you have contact with the Arts Council?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
More than once a week		
2-3 times a month	1	
About once a month		
Every 2-3 months	1	
Every 4-6 months		
At least once a year	1	
Less than once a year		
Never		
Don't know		

Q12.	<b>And how often would you ideally like to have contact with the Arts Council?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
More than once a week		
2-3 times a month	1	
About once a month		
Every 2-3 months	1	
Every 4-6 months	1	

## 16.Priorities

Q13.	<b>How well would you say you understand the Arts Council’s goals and priorities?</b> <i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an ‘X’</i>
Very well	2
Fairly well	
Not very well	1

Q14.	<b>Thinking about the Arts Council’s work to make great art accessible everyone. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below? Please select either ‘strongly agree’, ‘tend to agree’, ‘neither agree nor disagree’, ‘tend to disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘don’t know / no opinion’ with an ‘X’ for each of the statements.</b>					
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don’t know / No opinion
The Arts Council uses its resources effectively to achieve its aims		1		1	1	
The Arts Council has a strong sense of mission		1		1	1	
The Arts Council has a clear plan or strategy to achieve its mission and goals		1		1	1	
The Arts Council sets its goals and priorities based on the needs of artists and arts and cultural organisations	1				2	
The Arts Council’s goals and priorities are relevant to and will meet the needs of the wider public	1				2	

Q15.	<p><b>Which of the following groups do you think <u>currently</u> benefits most from the Arts Council's work?</b></p> <p><i>Please rank the options in the table below from 1 to 4, where 1 benefits most and 4 benefits least.</i></p>	
	Artists	7
	Cultural organisations	4
	Government	9
	The public	10

Q16.	<p><b>Which of the following groups do you think <u>should</u> benefit most from the Arts Council's work?</b></p> <p><i>Please rank the options in the table below from 1 to 4, where 1 should benefit most and 4 should benefit least.</i></p>	
	Artists	4
	Cultural organisations	5
	Government	12
	The public	9

Q17.	<p><b>Thinking about how the Arts Council works to achieve its aims, indicate what type of impact the Arts Council has with regards to each statement in the table below.</b></p> <p><i>Please select either 'strong impact', 'some impact', 'limited impact', 'no impact' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each of the statements.</i></p>				
	Strong impact	Some impact	Limited impact	No impact	Don't know/No opinion
Supporting and promoting excellence in arts and culture	1	1	1		
Enabling more people to experience and be inspired by arts and culture		1	2		
Enabling artistic talent to thrive		1	1	1	
Supporting arts and cultural organisations to become more sustainable and resilient	1			2	
Encouraging innovation and experimentation in arts and culture			1	2	
Developing the knowledge and skills of arts and cultural leadership and workforce		1		2	
Developing a more diverse		1		2	

arts and cultural leadership and workforce					
Promoting arts and culture that reflect the diversity of contemporary Northern Ireland		1	1	1	
Enabling every child and young person to have the opportunity to experience arts and culture		1	1	1	
Encouraging greater public awareness of and enthusiasm about arts and culture		1	1	1	
Ensuring access to knowledge and learning experiences for all		1	1	1	

## 17. Openness

Q18.	<p><b>Thinking about how the Arts Council works as an organisation, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below?</b></p> <p><i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each of the statements.</i></p>					
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / No opinion
The Arts Council is open with its stakeholders and partners	1				2	
The Arts Council is confident in making and defending decisions		1			2	
The Arts Council is not afraid to challenge me or my organisation to help improvement		1		1	1	
The Arts Council seeks feedback from its stakeholders and partners		1		1	1	
I find it difficult to challenge the Arts Council if I do not agree with it	2			1		
The Arts Council listens to and understands my views		1			2	



## 18.Accountability and Trust

2.

Q19.	<p><b>The Arts Council is a public body which invests public money in the arts. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below?</b></p> <p><i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each of the statements.</i></p>						
		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/No opinion
	The Arts Council's decisions are clearly linked to its vision and goals		1		1	1	
	The Arts Council explains its investment decisions poorly	1	1		1		
	The Arts Council's decisions are informed by sound evidence			1	1	1	
	The Arts Council holds the organisations it funds properly to account	1		2			
	The Arts Council finds it difficult to show the value of its investments		2	1			
	The Arts Council is aware of the future challenges and opportunities for the arts and culture in Northern Ireland	1			1	1	

Q20.	<p><b>The Arts Council aims to be a trusted stakeholder within the arts and cultural sector. With this in mind, to what extent do you trust the Arts Council?</b></p> <p><i>Please select either 'a great deal', 'a fair amount', 'not very much', 'not at all' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each action in the table below.</i></p>					
	A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	Not at all	Don't know/No opinion	
To uphold the arms-length principle. This means making funding decisions which are independent of government.	1		1	1		
To invest to support Northern Ireland's arts and culture ecology in an intelligent way. This means making the best possible use of its resources to fund arts and culture across Northern Ireland.		1	1	1		
To make the case for public funding of arts and culture. This means acting as a strong advocate for the arts and culture sector.	1	1		1		
To bring people together and see connections and opportunities. This means helping people across the sector to work together.		1	1	1		



Q21.	<p><b>The Arts Council operates a range of funding and monitoring processes. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below?</b></p> <p><i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each statement.</i></p>					
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/No opinion
The Arts Council collects the right amount of data from funded organisations and projects		1	2			
The Arts Council makes good use of the data it collects from funded organisations and projects			3			
The Arts Council's funding application process is less complicated than other funders			2		1	
The Arts Council is not flexible or responsive in its approach to funding	2			1		
The process of applying for funding is bureaucratic and prohibitive	2			1		
I understand what funding is available for different activities	1	2				



## 19.Future priorities

Q22.	<b>Thinking about the next 12 months, what are the most important things for the Arts Council to continue doing?</b> <i>Please rank the options in the table below from 1 to 10, where 1 denotes most important and 10 least important.</i>	
		Rank (1-10)
	Continued investment	10
	Ensuring that its investment across Northern Ireland is distributed in a fair and more geographically balanced way	17
	Supporting and nurturing organisations	6
	Supporting and nurturing artists	7
	Making the case for investment in the arts and culture	10
	Arts Council staff to maintain regular and open communication with me/my organisation	27
	Provide expertise and specialist advice and intelligence about arts and culture	22
	Being transparent about decision-making	19
	Continuing to improve its operational efficiency	26
	Supporting more collaboration across the arts and cultural sector	19

## APPENDIX 4: SURVEY OF STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS THAT WORK WITH ACNI

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<b>Q1.</b>	<b>How often do you have contact with the Arts Council?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
	More than once a week	3
	2-3 times a month	1
	About once a month	1
	Every 2-3 months	1
	Every 4-6 months	2
	At least once a year	2
	Less than once a year	
	Never	
	Don't know	

<b>Q2.</b>	<b>How would you rate the quality of your working relationship with the Arts Council overall?</b>	
	<i>Please select one option from the table below and mark with an 'X'</i>	
	Very good	4
	Fairly good	5
	Neither good nor poor	1

Q3.	<p><b>The Arts Council operates a range of funding programmes with associated monitoring processes, in particular the Annual Funding Programme. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the statements in the table below?</b></p> <p><i>Please select either 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'tend to disagree', 'strongly disagree' or 'don't know / no opinion' with an 'X' for each statement.</i></p>						
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/No opinion	
The Arts Council collects the right amount of data from funded organisations and projects	1	3	2			4	
The Arts Council makes good use of the data it collects from funded organisations and projects	1	2	3			4	
The Arts Council's funding application process is less complicated than other funders		1	6			3	
The Arts Council is not flexible or responsive in its approach to funding		1	2	5		2	
The process of applying for funding is bureaucratic and prohibitive		1	4	2		3	
Q4.	<p><b>The new Programme for Government (PfG) sets out how government funding will be used to deliver various outcomes. Which of the outcomes do you consider ACNI and your organisation can work together to deliver?</b></p>						

*Please rank the options in the table below from 1 to 10, where 1 contributes most and 10 contributes least.*

	Rank (1-10)
Prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy	41
Have a more equal society	47
Enjoy long, healthy, active lives	53
Have an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential	27
Have more people working in better jobs	59
Have a safer community where we respect the law and each other	60
Have a shared society that respects diversity	31
Have a confident, welcoming, outward-looking society	34
Have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest	33
Give our children and young people the best start in life	40

Q5.	<p><b>The Programme for Government has identified many indicators that can be used to measure how well outcomes are being delivered. Which of these indicators do you think could be used to indicate the value of the service ACNI and your organisation deliver? 9 responses</b></p> <p><i>Please select all that apply</i></p>	
	Reduce health inequality	3
	Increase healthy life expectancy	2
	Reduce preventable deaths	2
	Improve the quality of the healthcare experience	1
	Improve support for looked after children	3
	Improve educational outcomes	3
	Reduce educational inequality	2
	Improve the quality of education	2
	Improve the skills profile of the population	4
	Improve child development	2
	Increase the proportion of people in work	1
	Reduce economic inactivity	1
	Increase the proportion of people working in good jobs	1
	Increase the size of the economy	1

Increase the competitiveness of the economy	2
Increase innovation in our economy	6
Increase respect for each other	8
Improve cultural participation	8
Increase the confidence and capability of people and communities	8
Improve our attractiveness as a destination	7
Increase shared space	7
Increase reconciliation	6
Improve our international reputation	7
Increase the proportion of graduates moving into employment or on to further study	2
Increase quality of life for people with disabilities	6

Q6.	<b>Thinking about the next 12 months, what are the most important things for the Arts Council to continue doing? 9 responses</b> <i>Please rank the options in the table below from 1 to 10, where 1 denotes most important and 10 least important.</i>	
	Rank (1-10)	
Continued investment	30	
Ensuring that its investment across Northern Ireland is distributed in a fair and more geographically balanced way	41	
Supporting and nurturing organisations	39	
Supporting and nurturing artists	36	
Making the case for investment in the arts and culture	35	
Arts Council staff to maintain regular and open communication with me/my organisation	52	
Provide expertise and specialist advice and intelligence about arts and culture	33	
Be transparent about decision-making	61	
Continuing to improve its operational efficiency	57	
Supporting more collaboration across the arts and cultural sector	46	

Q7.	<p><b>And thinking about the next 12 months, what do you think the Arts Council needs to change most to improve the way in which it works with your organisation? 9 responses</b></p> <p><i>Please rank the options in the table below from 1 to 7, where 1 denotes change most and 7 change least.</i></p>	
	Rank (1-8)	
More personal contact with Arts Council staff	31	
Work more on joint initiatives	10	
Better and clearer communication with Arts Council staff	38	
Better and clearer advice on funding	29	
Listen to me/my organisation more	42	
Change the way it funds activity	47	
Better at partnership and collaboration	23	
Provide more information about its work	32	

**Detailed Comments from Organisations**

No comments received from PHA and no response from NI Tourism

### **NI Housing Executive**

I believe the excellent work of the re-imaging programme delivered by ACNI that helps communities move away from sectarian imagery to more inclusive expressions of culture, is invaluable and should be continued, either with additional resources (e.g. Peace IV) internally through existing budgets

More could be made of the role of the arts in fostering racial equality and good race relations. The Mela is a good example of what can be achieved

### **Education Authority**

Although the Education Authority has no direct funding from DE to target this area, it can and does encourage schools to participate as appropriate in arts and cultural activities, especially through community links. In particular, the AmmA Centre, within the Education Authority, works hard to engage schools and young people in creative, innovative and culturally rich experiences that improve educational outcomes, reduce inequality and support young people in achieving their potential.

In this increasingly challenging era of funding for arts and culture it is imperative that as far as possible organisations work together to ensure that the maximum potential is achieved for all activities, not just in regard to the numbers of people involved but the sustainability of the outcomes. This will only come about by collaborative and effective planning. A way forward may include working with the new borough councils, particularly with regard to community planning and within that developing participation in culture and the arts. It may be appropriate to consider the opportunities that this presents to the sector – targeting local communities, meeting their needs and aspirations, increasing a wider geographic spread and linking into the economic and social benefits.

### **The Executive Office**

TEO (through the Brussels Office) works with ACNI to deliver the Brussels Platform, an international arts engagement programme promoting the culture and creativity of NI here in Brussels. Both ACNI and TEO provide funding and 'in-kind' support to this programme and we greatly value the Arts Council's commitment to this project which contributed to improving our international reputation and reaches a wide community of diplomats, senior EU officials, Members of the European Parliament, delegates from other member States etc.

This small, but strategically vital, programme allows us to showcase the cultural diversity and richness of NI to an influential audience, and additionally, gives our officials informal access and connection to key stakeholders which can be exploited to progress other Executive and NI priorities.

### **Northern Ireland Bureau**

NIB has worked with the Arts Council over a number of years on an ad hoc basis. Over the last 6 months we have formed a more cohesive response to working together in the USA. We are pleased with the positive change that believe this has come about because two officers visited New York and met with a number of cultural institutions NIB support. Before the visit of the officers communications between the offices were not as good as they should have been. We were often disappointed that we were not alerted to NI Arts council funded projects or artists visiting the US. It was a lost opportunity for the NI diplomatic office to assist in promoting a positive event/new story from NI.

We now are jointly funding a number of events together and communication between the offices is very good. Through this new change we now have a number of organizations in NY that will provide a platform for NI visiting artists. Being able to provide this avenue to NI artists in NY will deliver an international stage for the artists to promote their work in the cultural capital of the world.

The Arts Council provides a valuable service to the people of NI. They are innovative in their approach to the arts they are creating a platform in making NI a vibrant place to live. Our work in the US is to promote the best of NI and the Arts Council's work is essential when we are selling NI PLC to international companies and overseas visitors. They are helping in making NI an attractive place to live and to invest in.

We are excited by our growing relationship and we look forward to working closer together over the next few years.

### **Derry City and Strabane District Council**

Additional investment in arts sector, move to multi annual funding and alignment of complementary local government grant aid programmes

European Programmes represent an excellent opportunity for the sector in terms of forming new partnerships and undertaking stretch in terms of capacity and expertise development. There is scope for ACNI to lead on a number of these larger projects.

Development of specialist groups to focus on niche opportunities could feature as part of this process. For instance ACNI had initiated consultation regarding the development literary festivals some years ago with the promise of a dedicated grant aid and capacity building programme to follow. The work undertaken with regards to traditional music is an excellent example of working in partnership with the sector pulling upon hard data and solid research. Where the same issues have been identified across the councils community planning consultations there exists an opportunity for a partnership approach utilising benchmarking to drive best practice under particular themes – eg – in removing barriers to participation in the arts, improving health and wellbeing through the arts. Into this process would be invited the relevant strategic partners

such as the PHA. This also provides the opportunity for an agreed approach to impact measurement which in turn will provide a solid evidence base demonstrating the benefits of the arts.

Scope for ACNI and DCSDC to undertake a strategic partnership approach to delivery of specific outcomes and pilot initiatives rather than a grantee/grantee relationship. For example, ACNI and PHA currently code signing a pilot mental health and wellbeing programme aimed at young people (£600k in total). This is likely to be a grant aid programme although a strategic partnership arrangement with DCSDC may not be out of the question. The challenge fund is a positive step in this direction.

Cross border programmes represent a potential source of grant aid but more significantly present opportunities for the sector in terms of audience development, benchmarking and partnership working. An all Ireland approach to audience development for example is a logical model given the cross border patronage of venues right across NI but for those venues in close proximity to the border in particular

### **Belfast City Council**

Belfast City Council worked closely with ACNI in period 2012-16 on a number of joint initiatives. We would like to continue this relationship in period 2016-2020 and have had a number of initial conversations about potential initiatives and programmes. This type of joint working was supported by arts sector when consulting with them on Cultural Framework for Belfast Action Plan 2016-2020.

We would be keen to look at how this might include:

- Capacity building & skills development (Cultural Framework theme: Strengthening the sector)
- Increasing cultural participation (Cultural Framework theme: Inspiring Communities)
- International positioning (Cultural Framework theme: Attracting Audiences/ Distinctly Belfast & Strengthening the sector)
- Working together to leverage other sources of funding into the city to support culture, arts and heritage (Cultural Framework theme: Strengthening the sector)
- Streamlining funding processes & reporting (Cultural Framework theme: Strengthening the sector)

BCC have already begun talking to ACNI about the possibility of further streamlining the funding processes of both funders as there is a high crossover in clients especially to core funding programmes.