



Ambitions for the Arts: a Five Year Strategic Plan for the Arts in Northern Ireland 2013-2018

Summary of feedback from Public Consultation Phase

(This document is available in other formats on request)

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Overview

The purpose of the consultation phase was to provide a robust and purposeful test of the draft Five Year Strategic Plan. This involved engaging with as many stakeholders as possible through various channels and mechanisms. It is important to note that prior to consulting on the draft document, the successor plan was developed over a period of time and was constructed with on-going discussion with strategic stakeholders. For example, through annual sector meetings; consultation with the Arts Council Board; drawing on evidence from a number of data sources; and reviewing other Arts Council strategies/policies developed over the last number of years i.e. Arts and Older People Strategy and the Intercultural Arts Strategy.

In addition, the Arts Council Board established a Strategic Working Group to oversee the development of the Five Year Plan. This Strategic Working Group was established on the 7th June 2011, following a special two day residential meeting. A range of qualitative and quantitative evidence was analysed in order to assess the context for the successor five year strategic plan, helping to establish who attends the arts, the current artform picture and how artists are being supported. Other evidence was examined in the context of the arts and the economy, such as existing partnerships, future priorities and the Arts Council's role as an organisation.

Public engagement events

To complement the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) screening process, the Arts Council developed a programme of public engagement events. This included public meetings, workshops, dedicated artform sector platforms, stakeholder engagements and various social media channels including webinars, Facebook and Twitter.

The purpose of this wider engagement was twofold: to enable the Arts Council gauge views on its new plan and make refinements or changes where necessary; and to gain a sense of how it addresses the needs and challenges facing the arts sector. The overall aim was to create a shared vision for the development of the arts for the next five years.

To ensure that the Arts Council provided everyone with an opportunity to express their views, we made the Five Year Plan available in a variety of formats.

To enable young people to express their views in the most effective way we worked closely with Participation Network to develop a youth-friendly version of the Five Year Plan in preparation for five focus group sessions. The Participation Network also liaised with agencies and organisations to identify appropriate groups of children and young people to participate in the focus groups. Emphasis was placed on identifying Section 75 groups who experienced exclusion and marginalisation; from a BME background; and with a disability, as well as those who experience economic disadvantage.

The bespoke focus group sessions explored the main key themes identified within the Draft Strategy. Each session was also adapted to suit the target audience in each situation.

The series of public engagement events that ran from January to April 2013 are detailed below:

- A total of seven public meetings were held across Northern Ireland (2 each in Belfast and Derry~Londonderry, and one each in Omagh, Downpatrick and Ballymena) with a total of approximately 180 people in attendance.
- A total of eight workshops were hosted by a number of key stakeholders including the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA); the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA); Community Arts Partnership (CAP); Rural Community Network (RCN); Arts and Business (A&B); the Irish Language sector; and Voluntary Arts Ireland (VAI). As previously noted, the Arts Council procured Participation Network to undertake a number of focus groups workshops with young people. In total, 51 young people from a range of backgrounds and different areas of Northern Ireland were engaged in this process.
- Five dedicated artform sector platform meetings were hosted at the Arts Council, including Arts and Disability; Dance; Music, Opera and Traditional Arts; Visual Arts; and Festival and Venues.
- Six stakeholder engagements/meetings took place with the following organisations/groups: Libraries NI, DCAL Learning Forum, Volunteer Now, VAI, Belfast City Council Development Committee and the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaion (Joint North/South Working Group).
- The Arts Council utilised digital media as a medium of communication and consultation on the draft five year strategy. This included a webinar session in partnership with VAI. Robin Simpson, Chief Executive of Voluntary Arts travelled from London to participate in this session hosted at the Arts Council.
- Facebook and Twitter were also employed in providing individuals with another medium in which they could comment directly to the Arts Council during the consultation period. These channels acted as a useful tool for the Communications team in posting/promoting engagement events.

Public engagement topic guide

To assist discussion during the public meetings, workshops and dedicated artform sector platforms, the Arts Council developed a topic guide / short questionnaire.

This document also proved useful for those who did not get an opportunity to vocalise their comments at a particular session but wished to submit their views for consideration. This was also a useful tool for those who were unable to attend a session but could submit their comments via email or post.

Question 1:

- A) Do you agree with the ambitions set out in the new strategy?
 - If not, what would you change and why?
- B) In your view, do you think the right themes have been identified?
 - If not, what would you change and why?

Question 2:

Theme 1: Champion the Arts

- A) Do these priorities fit with your expectations of how the Council should advocate the Arts?
 - If not, what would you change and why?
 - Are there priorities you feel should be added under Theme 1?
- B) In your view what should be prioritized, i.e. resources focused upon and why?

Question 3:

Theme 2: Promote Access

- A) Do these priorities fit with your expectations of how the Council should advocate the Arts?
 - If not, what would you change and why?
 - Are there priorities you feel should be added under Theme 2?
- B) In your view what should be prioritized, i.e. resources focused upon and why?

Question 4:

Theme 3: Create a resilient sector (since reworded post consultation to 'Build a sustainable sector')

- A) Do these priorities fit with your expectations of how the Council should advocate the Arts?
 - If not, what would you change and why?
 - Are there priorities you feel should be added under Theme 3?
- B) In your view what should be prioritized, i.e. resources focused upon and why?

Question 5:

- A) What lessons have been learnt over the last five years to help the Arts sector over the period of the new five year plan?
- B) What do you think the Arts Council can improve upon and how can it be achieved?

The following section presents a summary of all comments received during the programme of public engagement events which took place between January and April 2013.

Key Themes that emerged from consultation

This section provides a summary of the feedback received through the public consultation phase of the Five Year Strategic Plan.

Due to the high number of responses to the Five Year consultation, the Arts Council is unable to provide an individual response to all consultees. However, all responses made during the screening and EQIA stage of the process have each been addressed individually and can be found in the Five Year Strategic Plan Outcome Report, in line with ACNI's commitment to complying with equality duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.

The main themes that emerged from the public consultation have been divided into three tables:

Table 1: Key strengths

Table 2: Areas for improvement

Table 3: Conflicting viewpoints – this highlights those themes that divided opinion amongst those that were consulted.

Each theme, where relevant, is complemented by a response from the Arts Council in the right hand column in tables 1 to 3.

A list of the consultees who highlighted the key strengths and areas for improvement in the Five Year Strategy via email / letter correspondence, public meetings, workshop events, dedicated artform platforms, stakeholder meetings and social media channels are provided in Annex 1.

Table 1: Key strengths highlighted by consultees

Key strengths	ACNI Response
<p>Advocacy: Universal agreement that the theme 'Champion the Arts' captured current realities; the arts contribute to public good; with useful social by-products that occur as a result of arts funding but there was a feeling more needs to be done in garnering the evidence and ensuring its visibility. The forthcoming CSR funding discussions will be 'testing' as the Arts are perceived to be a 'soft target' for cuts. There is a belief that the 'Fair Deal' campaign (2010) demonstrated how the sector can work cohesively together and that the Arts Council should take a leadership role in this work. There is a need to put together an advocacy strategy that allows various agencies to put the case for</p>	<p>The Arts Council supports the importance of undertaking evaluations in measuring outputs and the quality of artistic offering in Northern Ireland. The strategy states the following in relation to this area of work:</p> <p>'By working with the arts sector we can make a compelling case together and advocate the value of arts, through think pieces, articles, newsletters and briefings with political parties.</p> <p>Using quantitative research, programme evaluation, case study and personal</p>

<p>the arts (not solely the role of the arts sector but involving health, education and the private sectors).</p>	<p>testimony, we will gather strategic insights that can be used and acted upon by us and by others.'</p>
<p>Reconciliation: There were endorsements for the references to the role arts play in a society emerging from conflict and how the arts continue to occupy a space that enables discussion around issues of identity, belonging, contested space and cultural expression. It was acknowledged that past ACNI programmes have contributed to peace building and transformative processes and it was suggested that a 'good relations lens' could be effectively applied to identify barriers and develop actions to redress exclusion.</p>	<p>Within the Five Year Plan, theme 2 sets out our clear statement to Promote Access to the Arts and in doing so, demonstrates our commitment to DCAL's vision of tackling poverty and social exclusion:</p> <p>'We will encourage more people and communities to become engaged and more deeply involved in the arts.</p> <p>Tackling barriers to engagement in the arts and encouraging development and diversification of audiences are key ways in which the Arts Council will demonstrate its commitment to DCAL's expressed vision to target poverty and social exclusion.'</p> <p>The Arts Council recognises the role that the arts can play in a society emerging from conflict. Under Theme 2, 'Building Peace through the Arts' will continue to connect artists with local communities imagining a different future for themselves as a result of the 'peace process' through developing new artworks to replace paramilitary murals.</p>
<p>Partnership Working: The ambition to build new partnerships in key areas (education & learning, health and wellbeing) was widely endorsed. There was a feeling amongst those working in the sector that they tend to operate in 'silos': there is a need to promote cooperation between artists and arts organisations; between the sector and wider stakeholders.</p>	<p>The Arts Council is committed to working with partners from across all sectors including public, private and voluntary in order to achieve our ambition of placing the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life. By doing so, we will create a stronger, healthier creative sector and foster opportunities for artists, arts organisations and the communities which they serve.</p> <p>Partnership working is set out under 'our ambitions' of the revised strategy document and the following additional narrative is detailed under the sub-</p>

	<p>heading of the plan 'To Build Partnerships':</p> <p>"In the course of this plan, we will develop new partnerships in education and others in health and well-being to anchor further our work in the hardest to reach communities. We will bring to fruition programmes in after school arts with our partners in education and the community and with the Public Health Agency."</p>
<p>Widening Access: There was widespread support for the Arts Council's ambition to promote access to the arts, particularly through arts activities targeted at those living in the top 20 per cent most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs).</p>	<p>The Arts Council notes these comments and welcomes support for this ambition from consultees.</p> <p>Under Theme 2 of the Plan, we will encourage more people and communities to become engaged and involved in the arts and we will increase the proportion of arts activities delivered to the top 20% of the most deprived Super Output areas.</p>
<p>Diversifying Audiences: Respondents welcomed the new areas of development and the advent of dedicated programmes - work with older people, minority ethnics, disabled and young people.</p>	<p>Arts and Older People</p> <p>Through the Arts and Older People Programme, the Arts Council will support artists networking and training for those working with older people and support professional and social care staff participating in the programme.</p> <p>The text in relation to Arts and Older People has been altered to read:</p> <p>"We will develop a future Arts and Older People Programme 2013-2016 supporting its strategic themes as a means of promoting social inclusion, recognising the barriers which prevent older people from participating in a wide range of activities are different. We will use the arts as a creative vehicle to explore and highlight social justice issues</p>

	<p>through artist-led interventions. The themes of the programme: working with older people to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness; create a more peaceful, fair and inclusive community that does not discriminate on grounds of age and ethnicity; improve the quality of life of older people living in disadvantaged, marginalized and deprived areas; create activities for older people that promote positive mental health and wellbeing and strengthen the voice of older people.</p> <p>We will develop a programme of exhibitions, performances and showcase events; support artists networking and training for those working with older people and support professional and social care staff participating in the programme.</p> <p>Target: Increase the number of funded projects aimed at older people from 50 to 100”</p>
<p>Digital Technology: Respondents welcomed how the new strategy recognises the importance of embracing new technologies as a way of engaging audiences. The expansion of digital video, image and audio tools, social media and mobile internet access – often packed into people’s phones – is leading a revival in opportunities for participation. Social media was noted as an important means of communication; however, others warned that some people in society do not have access to such communication channels.</p>	<p>ACNI supports the role of digital media within the new strategy. The strategy notes how digital media and marketing will be utilized more fully to engage effectively with key audiences.</p> <p>Harnessing the power of social media and building better networks for knowledge exchange, creation and capture - is one of number of changes that are transforming the way we work. For example, during the life of the strategic plan the Arts Council will roll out a Digital Engagement Strategy to build vibrant online networks, deliver content to the public and reinforce relationships. In light of comments from respondents, the following narrative has been added to the final strategy:</p> <p>“We also know that we are living in extraordinary times, entering a new age</p>

of technological innovation with many people, especially the young, choosing how they consume, share, access and create artistic content, often on the move, and with previously unimagined possibilities. New approaches to creative content generated for digital platforms move us beyond conventional practice and increasingly redefine how we engage with each other in a digital age.

Whilst technology undoubtedly offers the power to connect, access to that potential is not evenly distributed. There are significant numbers of people who are digitally excluded and their access to artistic consumption, creation and distribution requires a dedicated focus.

In addition, under the section entitled An Organisation Ready for the Future the following narrative and bullet points are detailed in relation to digital technology:

We also looked closely at how we utilise digital media and marketing to engage more effectively with key audiences. Harnessing the power of social media and building better networks for knowledge exchange, creation and capture - is one of number of changes that are transforming the way we work.

- We will roll out a Digital Engagement Strategy to build vibrant online networks, deliver content to the public and reinforce relationships.
- We will maintain our commitment to improve our performance, ensuing we have the focus, innovation and adaptability to face a changing future.
- We will invest in our people and their learning development, listen to our customers, learn from the client satisfaction

	<p>survey, develop strong links with our clients, make sure our grant programmes and processes work effectively and create a culture partnership with our stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We are strengthening our systems, implementing a new ICT strategy and investing in the tools we use to gather information through the RFO Survey.” <p>The Arts Council, recognising the potential that social media has in reaching and engaging with its audiences, will be rolling out a series of social media sessions for internal staff in order to promote the use of this platform and increase the opportunities for the Arts Council to share information with stakeholders.</p>
<p>Voluntary Arts: Respondents welcomed the recognition in the draft document of the role of volunteering and also the endorsement given to the ‘Volunteering Toolkit’. Volunteering is providing opportunities to foster civic engagement and life-long learning. Theme Two might be expanded to state: ‘Promoting Access and Participation’. However, while the Arts Council has done much to encourage the construction of new local authority arts spaces, and this in turn has had a positive impact on groups involved in performing arts, there was a pressing issue around access to quality facilities at affordable prices and some groups mentioned how venue charges are increasing beyond their ability to pay. The problem also extends into gallery space. A proposal was put forward for the concept of a ‘Citizen’s Gallery’ as a vehicle to extend access to the stock of public venues (e.g. local authority spaces and libraries) through a scheme that might be jointly promoted with local government and Libraries NI.</p>	<p>The Arts Council understands the role of volunteering and although reference to the ‘volunteering toolkit’ has been removed from the strategy, it recognises the importance of rewarding the existing volunteer force...</p> <p>‘We will support volunteering in the arts and will raise the profile of volunteering by sponsoring an awards scheme. This will recognise those who choose to put their time, energy, skill and creativity into helping arts and cultural organisations which have established outstanding volunteering programmes.’</p> <p>The Arts Council recognises the importance of supporting and developing voluntary arts in Northern Ireland. The narrative within the voluntary arts section of the strategy has been altered to read:</p> <p>‘Throughout Northern Ireland there is a very significant level of engagement in voluntary arts: from amateur music</p>

	<p>groups, choirs and a youth orchestra, to video production; from drama groups to salsa dancing and ballroom; from floral art to craft-making. It is a hive of creative activity through which people participate in local arts and crafts groups in their own communities. The voluntary arts are important to the vitality of local communities. They encourage a culture of life-long learning and provide significant personal benefits.'</p> <p>We will support Voluntary Arts Ireland as the principal umbrella body for volunteering in the arts and will raise the profile of volunteering by sponsoring an awards scheme. This will recognise those who choose to put their time, energy, skill and creativity into helping arts and cultural organisations which have established outstanding volunteering programmes.</p> <p>Within the Introduction to the strategy, the Arts Council outlines its ambition to expand on the reach of the Arts, particularly to local communities, using venues such as Libraries:</p> <p>'The Arts Council is striving to deepen the value of arts to individuals and wider society, target resources to meet social and community challenges, deliver improved access, reach new audiences and enhance community engagement. In doing so, we will work with other members of the DCAL family to maximise the benefits of our rich, collective cultural resources, especially libraries, museums, archives and film.'</p>
<p>Ambitions: Respondents commented on the positive nature of the document, the strength of the Mission Statement, the context setting ('weather report') and the initial statement of ambitions (placing high quality arts projects within the grasp of socially excluded groups; supporting individual artists; core funding arts</p>	<p>"To place high-quality arts projects within the grasp of socially excluded groups" has been removed from the document. It has been replaced with the following in the introduction section...</p> <p>Our goal, however, remains constant: to</p>

<p>organisations; helping deliver benefits to our community; building partnerships; supporting skills development; encouraging voluntary activities in the art): these were seen as the Arts Council’s core raison d’etre.</p>	<p>place the work of our artists and arts organisations at the heart of our social, economic and creative life, advocating their worth in a way that connects with audiences, policymakers, investors and the wider society, particularly those suffering from the consequences of poverty and social exclusion.</p>
<p>External focus: It was positively welcomed that the draft document has fewer themes than its predecessor; that each theme is ‘externally focused’, and the reference to ‘Improving Our Performance’ an earlier theme of ‘Creative Connections’ has been removed, since this purely relates to the organisational processes of ACNI. However, there was a generally expressed view that on-going engagement with funded clients was vital to the success of the new strategy.</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. The purpose of the consultation was to provide a robust and purposeful test of the draft Five Year Strategic Plan. The consultation involved engaging with as many stakeholders as possible through various channels and mechanisms. It is important to note that prior to the consultation on the draft document, the successor plan was developed over a period of time and was constructed with on-going discussion with strategic stakeholders. For example, through annual sector meetings, consultation with the Arts Council Board, drawing on evidence from a number of data sources and through the development and consultation of other Arts Council strategies/policies over the last number of years, e.g. Arts and Older People Strategy and the Intercultural Arts Strategy.</p> <p>To complement the EQIA process, the Arts Council developed a programme of public engagement events. This took the form of public meetings, workshops, dedicated artform sector platforms, stakeholder engagements and various social media channels, e.g. webinar, Facebook and Twitter. The purpose of this wider engagement was twofold: so that the Arts Council could get a measure of views on the plan, to listen and find what refinements or changes were necessary but also to gauge how it addresses the needs and challenges faced, in the hope that it will become a shared vision for the development of the arts for the next five years.</p>

<p>Core Funding of the Arts Infrastructure: Broad welcome was given to the recognition in the draft document of the need to core-fund an infrastructure of well-maintained arts organisations. Particular reference was made to the recent changes to give organisations greater certainty through multi-annual core funding; this was welcomed since it creates conditions of greater stability for organisations to present programmes of excellence.</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. Core funding of the Arts Infrastructure is outlined under the ‘Our ambitions’ section of the strategy:</p> <p><i>‘To core fund arts organisations</i> Sustaining our commitment to core-fund arts organisations that demonstrate the impact their work is having in engaging new and more diverse audiences, especially those from our most disadvantaged communities, is a priority.</p> <p>A strong arts infrastructure provides the strategic platform to deliver strengthened public and community engagement. The building blocks of that infrastructure comprise: arts organisations of quality, strength and connectedness; resourceful artists of vision, engaging with audiences, learners and citizens.</p> <p>We will protect the health and well-being of key arts organisations improving their long-term creative and financial future. This will involve supporting them through direct funding but also helping them develop a mix of different sources of income and bring new approaches to their work through partnerships with others and by promoting an entrepreneurial spirit in the sector.’</p> <p>In addition, under the same section of the strategy, ‘to support skills development’ it states that:</p> <p>‘Through the interventions of the Arts Council - and our strategic delivery partner Arts & Business Northern Ireland (A&B NI) - we will support arts organisations to deliver their core business activities through tough times.’</p>
<p>Funding Programmes: Broad welcome from consultees to the range and diversity of funding programmes available.</p>	<p>ACNI notes these comments. The five Year Strategy emphasises the importance of funding programmes</p>

	<p>delivering added value to the communities they will serve, in order to increase the impact of public investment in the arts – central to this is being able to evidence and measure the impact of funding programmes. This is outlined under our Ambition <i>‘To help arts organisations deliver benefits to our community’</i>:</p> <p>‘As a funder we will seek to increase the impact of public investment in the arts. We recognise the need to have effective funding programmes in place but we also require those who we fund to be innovative and resourceful - to share, to collaborate, to take advantage of economies of scale, to encourage larger organisations to work with smaller ones, to maximise the investment and showcase what they do. As a sector we need to articulate what has been achieved through public investment in the arts capturing its value and expressing that through advocacy.’</p>
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Table 2: Areas for improvement highlighted by consultees

Areas for improvement	ACNI Response
<p>Strategic Focus: A five-year strategy needs to be ambitious and visionary; it should aspire to excellence and quality in the arts in Northern Ireland, on a national, European and world stage.</p> <p>Too much detail in the document: it needs to be much shorter, sharper and written at a strategic level. In particular, artform references do not work within the context of a strategy: some artforms are awaiting review (Literature); some are currently in development (Community Arts) and some are not mentioned (Carnival, Street Art and Circus).</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. The Artform Strategies section has been altered and there is no longer any specific detail concerning individual artforms.</p> <p>The artform strategies section within the document has been altered and specific reference to Carnival, Street Art and Circus added:</p> <p>Artform Strategies ‘The arts are, of course, not simply instrumental spheres of ‘business activity’. They have their own intrinsic worth. During the lifetime of this strategy we will continue the process of commissioning artform reviews to strengthen our understanding of the particular needs of each artform area. Specifically we will complete the Community Arts Review, undertake a Literature review, conduct an audit of the Traditional Music sector and commission the development of strategy for street arts, circus and carnival.</p> <p>Of course this does not vitiate the need for continued dialogue and investment in the needs of previously reviewed artform areas undertaken during the life of the last 5 year plan.’</p>
<p>Instrumental Approach: Over emphasis on social and instrumental outcomes with insufficient emphasis on core artistic values, quality and excellence. It was thought this exerts a pull on arts organisations whose area of expertise is the arts and not primarily in delivering social change.</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. There is a requirement to evidence the added value of the arts – the Arts Council understands that certain arts organisations are more naturally geared towards delivering social change, but we will work with arts organisations to develop delivery agreements that show how their programmes are reaching all parts of society. As a sector, more needs to be done to better articulate what has been achieved through public investment in the arts capturing its</p>

	<p>value and expressing that through advocacy.</p> <p>Emphasising the importance of the sector evidencing its added value to our communities is not a substitution for the recognition of values, quality and excellence within the strategy. Our Ambitions, the Arts Council has amended 'To support individual artists' to 'To support individual artists create work of excellence'. The section now has the following additional paragraph in relation to showcasing excellence on the world stage:</p> <p>'The extraordinary quality and range of work produced by our artists goes beyond what might be expected of a small region with a population of 1.8million people. Our artists have brought us distinction and we value and celebrate their achievements. Showcasing their work internationally and demonstrating its world-class standing remains a commitment over the life of this plan. We will do this by creating additional platforms for their work to be appreciated beyond these borders and by encouraging their collaboration with others on a global stage. This is equally the case for the work of our outstanding arts organisations whose work merits international exposure.'</p>
<p>Excellence: A range of consultees felt the pursuit of artistic excellence should be more clearly articulated through the strategy.</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. Under Our Ambitions, the Arts Council has amended 'To support individual artists' to 'To support individual artists create work of excellence'. The section now has the following additional paragraph in relation to showcasing excellence on the world stage:</p> <p>'The extraordinary quality and range of work produced by our artists goes beyond what might be expected of a small region with a population of 1.8million people. Our artists have</p>

	<p>brought us distinction and we value and celebrate their achievements. Showcasing their work internationally and demonstrating its world-class standing remains a commitment over the life of this plan. We will do this by creating additional platforms for their work to be appreciated beyond these borders and by encouraging their collaboration with others on a global stage. This is equally the case for the work of our outstanding arts organisations whose work merits international exposure.'</p> <p>The importance of 'excellence' in the Arts is outlined in the Foreword by Chair - this section has been added to the Strategy, post consultation:</p> <p>'The search for excellence is at the centre of every artist's life. It is essential to recognise its value and to support its achievement. Our principle is excellence in all and excellence for all. Helping artists to achieve the fullness of their potential, recognising and celebrating success, supporting the creation of work of a quality that will take its place on the international stage must all be priorities for a body charged by statute with the promotion of the arts.'</p>
<p>International reach: Insufficient reference into the international influence of the arts from Northern Ireland on the world stage and the importance of encouraging artists to look beyond these shores. Developing international platforms: more opportunities needed for artists to work internationally (SIAP threshold too restrictive): the strategy should be encouraging pioneering work of an international standard.</p>	<p>The revised strategy, under the section <i>'To support individual artists create work of excellence'</i> makes reference to the Arts Council's commitment to showcasing the work of individual artists from Northern Ireland on a global stage:</p> <p>'The extraordinary quality and range of work produced by our artists goes beyond what might be expected of a small region with a population of 1.8million people. Our artists have brought us distinction and we value and celebrate their achievements. Showcasing their work internationally</p>

	<p>and demonstrating its world-class standing remains a commitment over the life of this plan. We will do this by creating additional platforms for their work to be appreciated beyond these borders and by encouraging their collaboration with others on a global stage. This is equally the case for the work of our outstanding arts organisations whose work merits international exposure.'</p> <p>In addition, the Foreword by Chair section has been added to the strategy which recognises the importance of supporting quality work that will be showcased on the international stage:</p> <p>'The search for excellence is at the centre of every artist's life. It is essential to recognise its value and to support its achievement. Our principle is excellence in all and excellence for all. Helping artists to achieve the fullness of their potential, recognising and celebrating success, supporting the creation of work of a quality that will take its place on the international stage must all be priorities for a body charged by statute with the promotion of the arts.'</p>
<p>Sustainability: Many respondents spoke about structural instability within the sector, highlighting a lack of capacity to deliver visionary work. The effects of cost inflation, pressures on box office and fears of losing ACNI/local authority funding prevail. Few were able to achieve 'full-cost recovery' for services delivered on behalf of funders; many are experiencing shorter project cycles, reduced project activity and job insecurity.</p> <p>Some felt it was unrealistic to expect high quality arts to be provided where the funding is inadequate and there is poor infrastructural support. In addition, some mentioned the strains of meeting administrative burdens, e.g. HMRC requirements and funders monitoring expectations. Some said the sector is at a 'tipping point' and felt the term 'resilience' does</p>	<p>ACNI notes these comment. The Arts Council has renamed Theme Three within the strategy from 'Create a Resilient Sector' to 'Build a Sustainable Sector'. We have expanded the range of activities to assist organisations diversify incomes.</p> <p>The relevant section now reads:</p> <p>"Building a sustainable sector in times of austerity is the greatest challenge we face. We take the view that arts and culture is a frontline service, because it shapes everything we do together and our sense of ourselves as a society.</p> <p>Arts organisations have told us how</p>

not capture the current plight of organisations (standstill funding in place for some time).

Respondents felt that the third theme (Resilient Sector) should be refashioned, highlighting stronger measures to develop sustainability, though there was a lack of consensus of what these should be (e.g. training and support in marketing, developing business plans, governance issues and entrepreneurship). There were some radical suggestions: some felt that ACNI should undertake a 'root and branch' portfolio review examining current commitments, in order to 'rationalise' the body of core-funded organisations. It was suggested this could be done by using 'performance driven criteria'. Some felt this would also tackle the perception of funding being allocated on the basis of 'historic' precedences.

Engaging beyond 'traditional revenue streams' and unlocking other areas of funding was also thought to be important in times of austerity. There needs to be an expanded effort in targeting Trust, Foundations and European programmes.

difficult they believe the next three to five years are going to be. They spoke of structural instability, highlighting a lack of capacity to delivery visionary work of excellence. Many are experiencing shorter project cycles, reduced project activity and job insecurity. Cuts in public funding combined with pressures on box office, have resulted in Boards of arts organisations across the arts sector facing some tough choices.

We recognise this is likely to be the pattern for the foreseeable future, and, indeed, the Arts Council will also have to make difficult decisions about its resource allocation.

As an Arts Council we know we need to protect our historic investment and the richness and diversity it represents as best we can. In light of the changing funding climate our emphasis will be on promoting greater collaboration between organisations to increase efficiency and innovation and strengthening business models to diversify their income streams.

Working with partners we will:

- deliver business development support; strengthen the skills base within the sector through training, coaching and workshops; offer a range of practical supports and help cultural organisations lever sponsorship and funding from Europe.
- strengthen governance;
- improve mechanisms for income-generation and encourage funded organisations to be entrepreneurial and exploit opportunities.
- build capacity in key areas such as audience engagement that utilises digital platforms and

	web-based technologies as a driver for business.’
<p>Touring: More emphasis needed on strengthening touring opportunities, particularly on a cross-border basis.</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. Within the revised version of the plan, reference to a new island wide touring initiative is made under our ambitions to Build Partnerships. During the lifetime of the Plan, Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon will be working together to encourage arts organisations and individuals to extend tours across the border. The following narrative in relation to touring appears in the final strategy:</p> <p>“We will encourage more touring companies to undertake audience development work. We will fund projects that have the potential to build strong connections between communities.”</p> <p>A clear intention to foster further collaborative working with An Chomhairle Ealaíon is also proposed:</p> <p>Our shared interest in building audiences for the arts on this island has led to the development of further joint initiatives aimed at ensuring we can share the best of each other’s artistic achievements. Through a new all Ireland joint touring scheme arts organisations across all genres will be able to tour to venues north and south.</p> <p>Target: Launch North/South Touring Scheme in 2014”</p>
<p>Role of the Individual Artist: The document understates the importance of supporting artists to create works of excellence and how that underpins many of the Arts Council’s other objectives. Respondents also highlighted the uncertain financial realities facing artists; the need to review SIAP and the level of awards</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment and agrees that supporting the individual artist is fundamental in growing and developing the arts in Northern Ireland. The following sections have been revised under the Ambitions section of the strategy to reflect this:</p>

made.

To make excellent art accessible to all

Individual artists are the cradle of our creativity as a society. Their ability to innovate; to challenge preconceptions; to broaden and enrich our lives; to create work of international acclaim; to transform the familiar, is fundamentally rooted in a search for excellence. As an Arts Council, our role is to invest in artistic excellence and ensure that work of quality is presented to the widest possible audience.

To support individual artists create work of excellence

Supporting professional artists and helping them make a difference in society is vital. In providing support to artists, we want to make Northern Ireland a place where they can thrive and achieve the respect their talents deserve. The extraordinary quality and range of work produced by our artists goes beyond what might be expected of a small region with a population of 1.8million people. Our artists have brought us distinction and we value and celebrate their achievements. Showcasing their work internationally and demonstrating its world-class standing remains a commitment over the life of this plan.

In pursuing the goal of investing in artistic excellence, we will continue to support artists' career development through our grant and residency programmes, including the Artist Career Enhancement Scheme (ACES) and expand the range of international opportunities for artists to present their work in the emerging global economies. We will encourage the development of new work through our own programmes such as Building Peace Through The Arts – Re-Imaging Communities Programme, the Arts and Older People Programme, as well as

	<p>business development support through the Creative Industries Innovation Fund. We will also encourage others in the public and private sectors to commission artists' work for schools, hospitals, the public realm and major capital projects.</p>
<p>Local Government Reform: Consultees noted the significant impact RPA will have on local arts provision. Comments described: suboptimal networking opportunities; and a need to strengthen the relationship between the arts sector and local government</p> <p>The statutory Community Planning process was viewed as an opportunity to open dialogues at the local level.</p> <p>ACNI needs to do more to challenge the perception that it is focused on Belfast and L'derry. However, it was welcomed that the Arts Council will assist and support local councils in the development of cultural strategies.</p>	<p>ACNI notes these comment. Reference to prioritising working with Belfast and Derry Councils has been removed from the revised plan.</p> <p>The Local Government section of the plan has been revised to include a commitment from ACNI to work more closely with the Local Government Association and promote the importance of local networking and partnerships:</p> <p>'Local authorities are one of our long standing partners, supporting arts development and provision. However, better networking and partnerships are necessary. Local authority funding for the arts is also being squeezed and there is a need to jointly promote the value and benefits to society of investment in the arts.</p> <p>We will look at new ways in which the relationship can be strengthened such as working more closely with the Local Government Association and establish a formal Advisory Group to promote better engagement.'</p>
<p>Irish Language Arts: Need for recognition of the intrinsic value and worth of the arts in the Irish language; apparent lack of a coherent strategy relating to the development needs of Irish language arts groups.</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. The Artform Strategies section has been altered and there is no longer any particular detail concerning individual artforms.</p> <p>ACNI's recognition to the significance of the Irish (and Ulster Scots) language is now referenced in the revised Plan under Our mission is to place the Arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life:</p>

	<p>'Recognising the importance of linguistic heritage in Irish and Ulster Scots, the Arts Council supports their role in articulating our diverse arts and cultural life through the range of language arts events and activities.'</p>
<p>UK City of Culture: Concerns were raised regarding the legacy of the UK City of Culture and the alignment of proposed actions shown in the draft document. Some felt there was too much focus on the legacy which could result in other parts of Northern Ireland becoming marginalised.</p>	<p>While the strategy makes reference to "the opportunities presented by City of Culture 2013" in providing a platform for the arts to contribute to the Legacy Framework, the Arts Council is committed to supporting artforms across all geographic areas of Northern Ireland.</p> <p>In addition, reference to maximising the legacy of the City of Culture, 2013 can now be found under the Local Government section of Theme 2.</p>
<p>Audience Development: While the ambition to attract more diverse audiences - especially those from disadvantaged communities was considered admirable, some consultees felt this process was outside field of expertise with the potential to result in tokenism.</p> <p>Generally, respondents welcomed new measures to map arts attendance and identify cold spots (not only by geography but also communities of interests), however, there were concerns that the Council might impose targets upon clients too early in the process and that this initiative would not capture data relating to free ticket/unticketed events. A number of organisations, particularly smaller ones, stated they would need assistance in capturing this data given limited resources.</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. The Arts Council is committed tackling barriers to engagement in the arts and encouraging development and diversification of audiences; by doing so ACNI is demonstrating its commitment to DCAL's expressed vision to target poverty and social exclusion.</p> <p>ACNI retains its commitment to support all of its funded arts organisations (regardless of size) in order to understand, retain, grow and diversify their audiences.</p> <p>Under Theme 3 of the revised strategy, ACNI has made an additional commitment in relation to the capacity building of partners when undertaking audience development work:</p> <p>"Working with partners we will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ build capacity in key areas such as audience engagement that utilises digital platforms and web-based technologies as a

	<p>driver for business.”</p> <p>In light of comments made around the ticketing initiative the strategy has been revised to read:</p> <p>“It will build upon the current market intelligence compiled by Audiences NI enabling effective audience engagement. This will help arts organisations understand who their audiences are and, most crucially, who they are not and why, as well as how best to reach them.</p> <p>Target: Work with Audiences NI to identify audience 'cold spots' and promote dedicated interventions throughout the lifetime of the plan.”</p>
<p>Rural Arts Provision: Insufficient emphasis on rural arts - its role in alleviating isolation and loneliness and strengthening community networks</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. Under Theme 2: Promoting Access, an additional paragraph in the revised Strategy outline the Arts Council’s commitment to increasing the proportion of arts activities delivered in rural areas.</p> <p>‘We will increase the proportion of arts activities delivered to the top 20% of the most deprived Super Output areas; increase the proportion of arts activities delivered in rural areas; increase the number of funded projects aimed at older people and deliver more projects relevant to ethnic minorities.’</p> <p>In addition, the revised Strategy has incorporated a section on Building Peace through the Arts – the Re-imagining communities programme encompasses rural arts, particularly in its ambition to extend its reach to the border counties and thus helping to tackle issues of peripherality and rural isolation. The strategy states the following in relation to this area of work:</p>

	<p>Community arts are often the conduit through which individuals and groups encounter the arts for the first time. We will support organisations involved in supporting community based arts projects, such as our long-term, expert partner, the Community Arts Partnership and we will continue to learn from best practice in this area.</p> <p>We will also continue to build on the success of the 'Re-imagining Communities Programme' which has connected artists with local communities imagining a different future for themselves as a result of the 'peace process' through developing new artworks to replace paramilitary murals. For many involved in this process, it is their first experience of participating in a creative arts-led venture and one which engenders considerable local civic pride in its achievement.</p> <p><i>Target: Support the delivery of 90 new public artworks through the new Building Peace Programme by 2016"</i></p>
<p>Disability: A number of consultees commented that the Arts Council needs to acknowledge the needs of people with a broader range of disabilities seeking to access the arts as participants and attendees. I was also felt more appropriate by some to change the relevant target descriptor from 'encourage' to 'increase' the number of people with a disability accessing and participating in the arts.</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment and supports the need to tackle barriers people with disabilities may experience when wishing to access and participate in the arts. The strategy commits to revising its Disability Action Plan within 2013/14 and the future development of a dedicated Disability Strategy within the life of this strategy.</p> <p>Within the revised strategy, the terminology has been amended from 'encourage' to 'increase' the number of people with a disability accessing and participating in the arts. The text and target for this section has been altered to the following:</p> <p>Disability</p> <p>"People with a disability are much less</p>

	<p>likely to attend arts events than those without; participation levels are also lower. Given that one in five people in Northern Ireland has some form of disability, we will pioneer interventions to enable more people with a disability to engage in the arts. This will build upon work already undertaken, such as the Disability Charter Mark, which recognises how organisations are changing to ensure that the arts are accessible to everyone. We will require our funded organisations to demonstrate the practical measures they pursue to engage with disabled people as members of the audience or as participants in their work.</p> <p>Target: <i>Commencing 2014/15 we will implement the new 5-year Disability Action Plan to enrich the lives of people with disabilities aimed at increasing the number of disabled people engaged in the arts</i></p>
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Table 3: Conflicting viewpoints of consultees

Conflicting viewpoints	ACNI Response
<p>Art Gallery: While some gave strong endorsement for the concept of a dedicated Gallery to house 20th Century works in public ownership on account of the benefits this could bring in terms promoting and widening access; regional economic / tourism development (Development Committee BCC; the Civic Trust; the business sector; at a number of the public meetings), opinion was split. There were ‘health warnings’: the need to properly test actual or latent demand; physical location (Belfast or L’derry); others commented on the feasibility of funding such a major capital investment in times of austerity. Smaller regional galleries would benefit from strengthened touring programmes and access to more funding. A number of consultees suggested the creation of a Citizen’s Gallery and/or how current capital builds such as the MAC and the Ulster Museum could be utilized more fully.</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. The strategy outlines that an economic appraisal will be undertaken to examine the feasibility of a Dedicated Gallery for Northern Ireland during the life of the plan. By doing so, the benefits and risks of this proposal will be fully taken into account prior to final decision being made.</p> <p>Under our ambitions, the strategy reaffirms its commitment towards ensuring that key projects such as the Lyric and the MAC generate major opportunities for artists and practitioners. We expect them to utilise the new asset-base for the wider benefit of the citizen, building new audiences for the arts, strengthening the cultural offer and increasing diversity.</p>
<p>Honours System: While there was a belief that artists are undervalued there were mixed opinions about the merits of introducing an Honours System and how it would work. A number suggested alternative terminology such as Achievement Awards or Outstanding Contribution. In addition, other correspondence highlighted the need to support and highlight excellence and quality in the arts.</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. In light of all comments received during the consultation period, the Honours System target has been revised to read:</p> <p>‘Introduce an ‘acknowledgment system’ for our most distinguished artists by 2016.’</p> <p>The Arts Council has altered the title of the section from ‘Honouring our Artists’ to ‘Recognising our Artists’ in response to comments received from consultees.</p>
<p>Arts Voucher Scheme: This was welcomed as a useful concept but reservations were expressed that it might be perceived as ‘gimmicky’, with uptake skewed to the middle classes. How would it work; how would it be redeemed, would the voucher be given to the parent/guardian. A more fundamental and problematic issue is the need to adequately support and fund Early Years Arts Education. Currently both pre-school and school experience can be poor at offering rewarding cultural experiences.</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. In light of all comments received during the consultation, the strategy has been revised, with the removal of the Arts Voucher Scheme.</p> <p>The text in relation to apprenticeships has altered from the draft document to the final strategy. The section reads as follows:</p>

	<p>Apprenticeships</p> <p>Recognising that many of our young people encounter difficulties entering the workforce, we want to encourage them to see the arts as an attractive career option and, hence, we will also work with the Creative and Cultural Sector Skills Council to develop a creative apprenticeship pilot scheme aimed at young people wishing to fulfil their creative ambitions over the life of this strategy. This will necessitate working in partnership with the Department of Employment and Learning as well as Further Education accredited skills providers.</p> <p>Target: Establish a Creative Apprenticeship Pilot in Northern Ireland by 2014/15 targeted at 50 talented young people in areas of disadvantage rising to 100 young people over three years.</p>
<p>Artsmark: Many welcomed the introduction of Artsmark. However, a number of respondents commented that they would like to see a more detailed explanation of the target within the strategy.</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. Within the Arts Council’s forthcoming Youth Arts Strategy, its action plan commits to the following areas within both informal and formal education contexts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In collaboration with agencies and organisations working in the formal and informal youth sector, hold seminars to explore best practice in participative arts. 2. Implement developmental and skills based training opportunities for professional artists to work with children within formal and informal education contexts at early years, primary and post primary level. This will be based upon a scoping study which will examine the current provision for skills based training in order to ascertain the training needs for professional artists. This scoping exercise will be conducted in-house; no associated costs will be attached with this element.

	<p>3. Work with sector resource providers in establishing a database of professional artists with relevant training and experience to work within formal and informal education contexts.</p> <p>4. Roll out DCAL Quality Indicator framework to evaluate the quality of arts funded activity with educational content.</p>
<p>Specific artforms: The Arts Council did receive comments relating to specific artforms: in some cases referencing the omission of certain artforms (e.g. dance, photography, arts and health, festivals, circus and street art).</p>	<p>ACNI notes this comment. Issues related to specific artforms were not escalated as key areas within the revised strategy will no longer bear reference to specific artforms.</p> <p>As it would be impossible to provide detail against all artforms it was deemed appropriate that this section would be reduced and specific references only made to artform strategies that will be reviewed and/or developed over the next five years. The revised text for the artform strategy section is detailed below:</p> <p>“Artform Strategies</p> <p>The arts are, of course, not simply instrumental spheres of ‘business activity’. They have their own intrinsic worth. During the lifetime of this strategy we will continue the process of commissioning artform reviews to strengthen our understanding of the particular needs of each artform area. Specifically we will complete the Community Arts Review, undertake a Literature review, conduct an audit of the Traditional Music sector and commission the development of strategy for street arts, circus and carnival.</p> <p>Of course this does not vitiate the need for continued dialogue and investment in the needs of previously reviewed artform areas undertaken during the life of the last 5 year plan.”</p>

	<p><i>The Creative Industries</i></p> <p>An independent evaluation highlighted that the Creative Industries Innovation Fund (CIIF) has played a role in building capacity for export and external sales, 'internationalising' the outlook of participant companies - providing training and skills development.</p>
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Annex 1: List of consultees

The Gordon Gallery
Accidental Theatre
Streetwise Community Circus
Northern Ireland Theatre Association
DU Dance
Community Relations Council
Lisburn City Council
Arts Care
Royal Academy of Dance Examiner
High Points Youth Ballet CIC
Play Resource
Volunteer Now
Tourism, Culture and Arts within Belfast City Council
Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival
Belfast Festivals Forum
Armagh City and District Council
City of Derry Guitar Festival
Kabosh Theatre
Booktrust
Dance Resource Base
Belfast Civic Trust
The Metropolitan Arts Centre (MAC)

Mummers Foundation
POBAL
Voluntary Arts Ireland
Arts & Business Northern Ireland
Belfast Harbour
NITB
Irish Language Sector
Community Arts Partnership
Rural Community Network
NICVA Arts Policy Forum
Participation Network
NILGA
Venues and Festivals Sector
Music and Traditional Arts Sector
Visual Arts Sector
Arts and Disability Sector
Libraries NI