



Arts Council of Northern

**ART FORM AND SPECIALIST
AREA POLICY 2013-2018**

VOLUNTARY ARTS



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Awarding funds from
 The National Lottery®

www.artscouncil-ni.org

Preamble

The Voluntary Arts Policy has been developed in line with *Ambitions for the Arts*, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's five-year Strategic Plan for the Arts, 2013-18. The overarching priorities of the Plan – champion the arts, promote access, build a sustainable sector – are reflected across the set of the Council's Art Form and Specialist Area policies, 2013-18.

Introduction to Voluntary Arts Policy

Voluntary Arts is the term for the arts activities that people carry out non-professionally, for self-improvement, social networking, leisure and pleasure purposes. The art form range is wide and includes dance, drama, literature, music, media, visual arts, crafts, applied arts, folk arts and festivals.

Voluntary Arts activity plays a vital role in promoting health, wellbeing and community cohesion, contributing an estimated £50 million to the UK arts economy each year. More than half of the UK's adult population is engaged in some form of voluntary arts or crafts and many people who are now well-known in a professional capacity became involved in their art form through a voluntary arts group. For example, Liam Neeson started out with the Slemish Players in Ballymena; James Nesbitt began acting with the Ulster Youth Theatre and James Galway started out with the Onward Flute Band and then the 39th Old Boys.

In supporting Voluntary Arts, the Council takes a partnership approach that acknowledges the more direct role that is played by other organisations. For example, we support Voluntary Arts Ireland as the lead organisation for the sector, providing an interface between small groups, art form umbrella organisations, funders and the rest of the arts infrastructure. We also support several art form umbrella organisations so that they can provide services to people who are involved in the Voluntary Arts.

Voluntary Arts groups with a formal legal constitution and a suitable project are eligible to apply under any of the Council's funding schemes, but the most appropriate source of funding for small local groups is generally the *Small Grants* Lottery scheme, which has a simple application procedure, a quick decision turnaround and straightforward reporting requirements. Many relatively inexperienced groups are successful in obtaining funding through

Small Grants, for example using the grants to pay fees to professional artists as workshop facilitators or tutors. Grants of up to £10,000 are available.

The Council recognises the value of arts for pleasure and leisure – for its own sake. Involvement in Voluntary Arts activity can also be a step towards professional arts activity; is a source of improved health and wellbeing and is of social benefit in drawing people together around non-confrontational activities. We acknowledge that there is a need to strengthen the support network and to encourage more opportunities for voluntary, non-professional involvement in the arts, in partnership with arts organisations in general and local authorities in particular.

Funding Objectives

- help to meet sectoral training needs;
- create sectoral networking and encourage skills transfer opportunities within the sector;
- increase or develop audience and participation levels for Voluntary Arts activity;
- strengthen governance amongst Voluntary Arts organisations;
- increase inclusivity and legislative compliance amongst Voluntary Arts organisations;
- enhance the 'good relations' contribution of volunteer-led groups;
- strengthen the quality of marketing of Voluntary Arts activities, hence improving ticket sales, increasing group membership and strengthening sustainability;
- increase opportunities for Voluntary Arts organisations to employ professional artists;
- give evidence of the social and/or well-being benefits of involvement in Voluntary Arts activities.

Additional Information

'Ambitions for the Arts' Five Year Arts Strategy, 2013-2018

www.artscouncil-ni.org/about-us/strategy

Art Form and Specialist Area Policies, 2013-2018

www.artscouncil-ni.org/the-arts

Acquisitions	Drama
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Dance	Youth Arts



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