



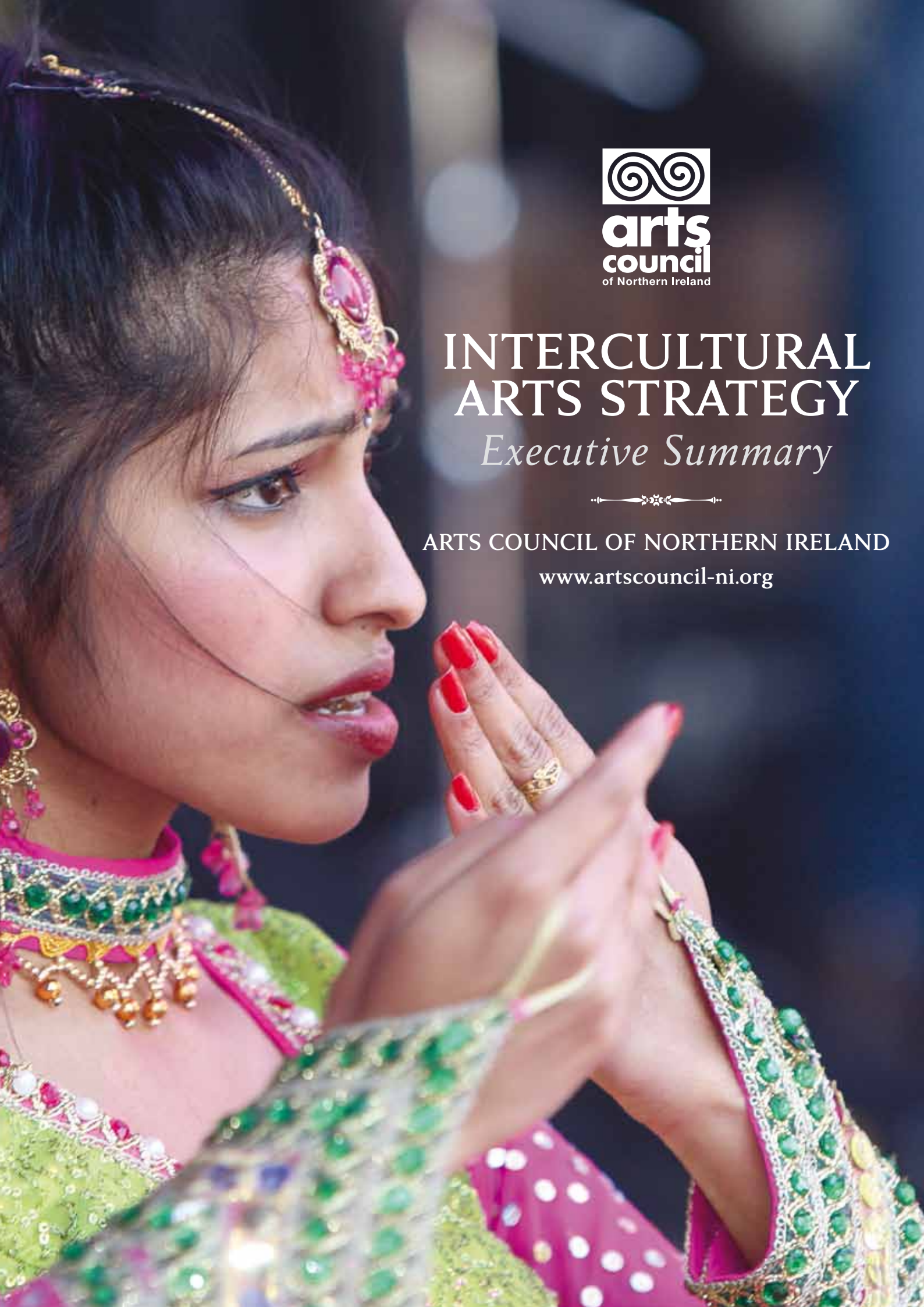
INTERCULTURAL ARTS STRATEGY

Executive Summary



ARTS COUNCIL OF NORTHERN IRELAND

www.artscouncil-ni.org



INTRODUCTION

This intercultural arts strategy has been prepared in recognition of the priorities set out in the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's (ACNI) five year strategy, *Creative Connections* for the period from 2007-2012. Under Theme 3 (Growing Audiences and Increasing Participation) the five year strategy sets out how the Arts Council will seek to foster the expression of cultural pluralism, build dialogue and promote understanding, through interchanges within and between communities and their cultures.

The Arts Council has developed a number of artform and specialist policies. These policies address how each of the four themes within the five year strategy are implemented through the work of the Arts Council. Though not confined to Community Arts practice, the Community Arts Policy articulates aspects of multiculturalism:

“NORTHERN IRELAND SOCIETY FACES THE CHALLENGE OF CREATING A SHARED FUTURE BASED ON RESPECT, TOLERANCE, PEACE AND EQUALITY. COMMUNITY ARTS PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN UNDERSTANDING THE VARIETY OF OUR OWN IDENTITIES, CELEBRATING THE MULTICULTURALISM THAT EXISTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND.”

It is within this broad context that the Arts Council has developed a wider, cross cutting Intercultural Arts strategy and dedicated Action Plan.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Northern Ireland has a significantly smaller minority ethnic community than the rest of the UK. The last Census (2001) revealed that it was less than one per cent (14,272 people) of the population, compared to nine per cent in England, and two per cent in Wales and Scotland. However, since the accession of the A8 countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 2004, Northern Ireland has increasingly become a more diverse society. A census of population is normally taken every 10 years. The next Census will be undertaken in March 2011; however, the population analysis from that will not be available until the summer of 2012. As the current census material is quite dated, this section draws on a number of other data sources as a means to quantify this sub-group particularly since the rise of immigration in 2004, e.g. NISRA's long term immigration estimates, NI Work Registration Scheme Registrations and National Insurance Number Applications. When the results of the 2011 Census are released this strategy will be updated to reflect the new data.



POLICY CONTEXT

Section three outlines existing legislation, policies, and programmes within the context of Northern Ireland on the advocacy, protection and support of minority ethnic communities within society. In Northern Ireland the Racial Equality Strategy (2005-2010) provides the framework for Government to create a society that is free of racism and where all can enjoy equality of opportunity and equal protection. The Racial Equality Strategy sets out six aims for Government in tackling racial inequalities and racism in society: Elimination of Racial Inequality; Equal Protection; Equality of Service Provision; Participation; Dialogue and Capacity Building. Government's draft Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (2010) proposes to lift these six aims and revisit them after the launch of the CSI programme. The aim of CSI is to build a strong community where everyone, regardless of race, colour, religious or political opinion, age, gender, disability or sexual orientation can live, work and socialise in a context of fairness, equality, rights, responsibilities and respect.

This section also demonstrates how other regions are currently addressing race issues in society today. It is clear that some governments are further ahead than others; this is mainly due to differing legislative structures and priorities. However, there are a number of strategic commonalities across the government agendas. These include:

- the promotion of racial equality and fairness;
- developing good race relations;
- tackling racial discrimination;
- promoting diversity and tolerance.

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Section four considers the Arts Council's commitment to addressing the needs of minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland by improving access to and participation in the arts.¹ Theme 3 (Growing Audiences and Increasing Participation) of the current five year strategic plan addresses the changing demographics of the population in Northern Ireland when it states:

“INCREASING NUMBERS OF PEOPLE FROM AROUND THE WORLD ARE CHOOSING NORTHERN IRELAND AS A PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK. ARTS ACTIVITY HAS THE POWER TO BOTH EXPRESS THE RICHNESS AND DIVERSITY OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY AND CONFRONT THE CHALLENGES RAISED BY PREJUDICE. THE ARTS COUNCIL OF NORTHERN IRELAND THROUGH ITS FUNDING WILL CONTINUE TO ACTIVELY FOSTER THE EXPRESSION OF CULTURAL PLURALISM, BUILD DIALOGUE AND PROMOTE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, THROUGH INTERCHANGES WITHIN AND BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND THEIR CULTURES.”

The narrative draws on key data and research relating to the arts and minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland and further afield, and considers barriers encountered by minority ethnic communities in accessing and participating in the arts. Such an analysis helps to inform how the emerging strategy will tackle such barriers, encourage partnership working, build upon the Arts Council's history of funding as well as supporting work with minority ethnic communities. The analysis of primary qualitative data gathered through consultations with key stakeholders² (one-to-one meetings; a sectoral meeting of providers and arts organisations; a questionnaire developed and distributed amongst ASOP clients³ as well as a focus group meeting with ethnic artists) is also considered. The consultation process ran from September 2010 – February 2011.

Key issues raised amongst consultees include:

- barriers hindering minority ethnic communities from accessing and participating in the arts in Northern Ireland: language, financial issues, lack of awareness, generational factors, apathy and access problems;
- the need for development within the sector in terms of capacity building and training;
- 4 • raising awareness of the existing funding and network opportunities for minority ethnic arts in Northern Ireland;
- the importance of integrating areas such as intercultural engagement, developing good relations, increasing awareness of diversity, tackling racism and developing community cohesion into the strategic direction of the strategy;
- the need for financial resources to develop work within the sector.

¹ In accordance with Theme 3, Objectives 3.1 and 3.2 (ACNI's 5 year Strategic Plan and Corporate Plan).

² Key stakeholders included Government departments, statutory bodies, academics, politicians, community/voluntary sector as well as arts organisations and artists.

³ ASOP clients receive funding support from the Arts Council's Annual Support for Organisations Programme.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Section five summarises the current internal and external strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the successful implementation of this intercultural arts strategy. This is followed by a consideration of possible solutions to the identified threats/risks that will be addressed within the engagement strategy.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The principal aim of the engagement strategy is to increase the avenues for minority ethnic communities to access and participate in the arts in Northern Ireland and further afield. Section six sets out how the Arts Council proposes to meet the creative and social needs of minority ethnic communities through a set of strategic themes and objectives with related performance indicators. The strategic themes of this intercultural arts strategy centre upon the artistic and social issues identified through the Arts Council's research and consultation within the sector. The six strategic themes include: Intercultural Engagement; Developing the Minority Ethnic Arts infrastructure; using the arts to develop Community Cohesion; using the arts to increase awareness of Diversity, and developing programmes that use the arts to develop Good Relations and as a vehicle to tackle Racism.



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PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Section seven details how the Arts Council will monitor and evaluate the performance and implementation of the strategy. This includes both formal annual reports as well as less formal methods such as updates on a dedicated page on ACNI's website. Annual stocktakes will help inform each year's annual Action Plan as well as determining if /how the strategy needs to be altered due to changing internal/external circumstances. The Arts Council will also evaluate all projects/ programmes throughout the duration of this strategy. Such evaluations will contribute to the body of evidence that currently exists on minority ethnic arts in Northern Ireland.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Recognising the importance of this work, it is desirable to embed a communications strategy to ensure that the outcomes of the strategy receive high profile media attention. A communications strategy will include: showcasing of minority ethnics projects, building the profile of minority ethnic issues, conveying the key messages of minority ethnic communities as well as supporting advocacy by strengthening and providing a voice for minority ethnic communities.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This intercultural arts strategy has been developed during a period of financial uncertainty when the Arts Council is facing significant pressures upon its resources. In consideration of this constraint, the strategy outlines how the Arts Council might fund a dedicated programme, for example, by application to Trusts and Foundations and/or working in tandem with other agencies (e.g. PSNI). In addition to this, the strategy sets out how the Arts Council will utilise the current mechanisms to encourage greater access and participation for minority ethnic communities in the arts, e.g. raising awareness of current funding streams (ASOP and SIAP) applicable for such work, thus making efficient use of existing funding mechanisms.



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