



# Arts Council of Northern Ireland Client Satisfaction Survey February 2010

Final report prepared for The Arts Council of Northern Ireland  
March 2010





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# 1. Executive summary

## **Background**

This study is the third in a series of client satisfaction surveys undertaken by The Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) since 2005. Each survey took place in the calendar year preceding publication; for ease of understanding, this report refers to all waves by their year of publication (2006, 2008 and 2010).

The surveys measure the importance clients attach to, and their satisfaction with, a range of aspects of service. Clients are also asked to rate their satisfaction with ACNI's progress towards strategic objectives and with the Council's performance overall.

The survey involved the random sampling of ACNI funded clients from each of the following three funding streams to achieve a final sample of 125 completed interviews:

- Lottery;
- Support for the Individual Artist Programme (SIAP); and
- Annual Support for Organisations Programme (ASOP).

## **Overall satisfaction**

Overall satisfaction with the Council was high, with a Client Satisfaction Index™ score of 73.9%. This represents a small but steady increase in satisfaction, from 73.4% in 2006 and 73.7% in 2008. The 2010 satisfaction scores varied by funding group, with SIAP clients expressing the highest levels of satisfaction (89.9%), followed by ASOP clients (73.4%) and Lottery clients expressing the lowest levels (69.5%).

The mean satisfaction score was 7.09. This compares to a mean score of 7.41 in 2006 and 7.05 in 2008.

## **Client priorities**

Clients were asked to assess the importance of 23 aspects of service provided by ACNI. The top five roles are detailed in Table 1.1 alongside the mean satisfaction scores for each aspect.

**Table 1.1: Most important roles of ACNI and levels of satisfaction**

Role	Mean importance rating	Mean satisfaction rating
Being committed to artistic development	9.77	7.54
Acting as an advocate for the arts	9.71	7.47
Managing funds effectively	9.67	7.74
Handling queries effectively	9.54	8.12
Providing relevant information	9.54	7.95
Being clear about the support the Council can provide	9.54	7.48

It can be seen that clients are more likely to be satisfied with ACNI in relation to the processes that they value (managing funds effectively, handling queries effectively and providing relevance information). However satisfaction levels are lower in relation to the strategic roles that they hold important (acting as an advocate for the arts and being committed to artistic development).

### **Highly rated aspects of service**

The aspects of services that clients are most likely to be satisfied with include:

- The Council's commitment to equal opportunity (8.51)
- Responsiveness to queries (8.28)
- The Council's commitment to diversity (8.28)
- Handling queries effectively (8.12)
- Administrative expertise (8.07).

### **Lowest rated aspects of service**

Lowest satisfaction scores related to the following:

- Providing an explanation for unsuccessful applications (6.18)
- The speed of making funding decisions (6.46)
- Providing professional development (6.69)
- The ease of the application process (6.88)
- Being open to new ideas (7.02).

### **Strategic objectives**

Clients were asked to rate the performance of ACNI in relation to its strategic objectives. They were most likely to be satisfied with the council in relation to their role in expanding opportunities for people to enjoy the Arts (7.06) and for people to take part in the Arts (7.03). At the other end of the scale levels of satisfaction were lowest with regard to achieving international recognition of the Arts in Northern Ireland (6.00), influencing government (6.38) and improving the well being of individual artists.

### **Areas to focus on**

The following table highlights the key aspects of service that we recommend receive additional attention from ACNI to improve levels of satisfaction further.

Area	Aspect to focus on
Funding applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improving the explanation for unsuccessful funding applications</li><li>• The speed with which decisions about funding are made</li></ul>
Contact with council staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing relevant information</li><li>• Improving staff knowledge of the Arts</li></ul>
The role of the Arts Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supporting artistic development</li><li>• Showing commitment to professional development</li></ul>
Strategic objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Achieving international recognition for the Arts in NI</li><li>• Influencing government</li><li>• Improving the well-being of artists</li></ul>

## 2. Introduction and terms of reference

This study is the third in a series of client satisfaction surveys undertaken by Arts Council of Northern Ireland's (ACNI's) since 2005. The surveys were initiated to measure and track client satisfaction across various aspects of ACNI's service. The findings allow the Council to identify areas where the service could be strengthened and improved as part of its ongoing commitment to quality.

The Council attaches significant importance to the overall level of client satisfaction, as this figure is used to measure the objective 'to become a more client-focused organisation' under Theme 4 of the Council's Five Year Plan *Creative Connections*. An additional series of questions was added to the survey in 2009 to establish how well clients felt the Arts Council was performing in meeting its strategic objectives. This information will feed into the mid-term review of the strategy currently being undertaken.

Each survey took place in the calendar year preceding publication; for ease of understanding, this report refers to all waves by their year of publication (2006, 2008 and 2010).

The main findings from the 2006 report were:

- Managing funds effectively was the aspect of service of most importance to clients;
- Clients were most satisfied with the Council's performance in terms of being committed to equal opportunity;
- Clients were most dissatisfied with the Council's performance in terms of communicating objectives clearly;
- Communicating with artists was the aspect of service which most clients felt had most improved; and
- The level and timescale of funding was the aspect of service which most clients felt had become worse.

Key findings from the 2008 report were:

- Managing funds effectively was again the aspect of service of most importance to clients;
- Clients were most satisfied with the Council's performance in terms of making funds available quickly once approved;
- Clients were most dissatisfied with the Council's performance in terms of ease of the application process;
- Communicating was again the aspect of service which clients felt had most improved; and
- In line with the previous year's findings, lack of funding was the aspect of service which most clients felt had gotten worse.

### ***Terms of reference***

In line with the Council's focus on excellence in client service, it appointed Perceptive Insight Market Research (PIMR) to undertake the third wave client satisfaction telephone survey. The purpose of the survey was to provide ACNI with statistically valid measures of the importance and satisfaction clients attach to a set of core criteria or performance indicators. This information is used to guide the continuous improvement of processes within the Council, as well as providing an annual measure performance against Council targets. ACNI subsequently commissioned PIMR to produce this report on the findings of the survey.

## **Methodology**

### **Sample design**

The sampling frame for the study is all clients who have applied for funding from ACNI under the following initiatives:

- Lottery;
- Support for the Individual Artist Programme (SIAP); and
- Annual Support for Organisations Programme (ASOP).

ACNI funds a total of 448 individuals and organisations across these initiatives; however, as both individuals and groups can apply for more than one grant within and across funding streams, the first stage of sampling involved the removal of duplicates to ensure that responses were individual and that findings did not incorporate the views of any client more than once.

Of the final sample of 256 individuals and groups, a total of 125 interviews were achieved, representing an overall response rate of 49%. Table 2.1 provides details of the sample breakdown by funding group.

**Table 2.1: Final achieved sample by funding group**

	Total	Number selected for interview	Number achieved	% achieved
All	448	256	125	49%
Lottery	79	59	30	51%
ASOP	111	92	57	62%
SIAP	258	105	38	36%

### **Questionnaire design**

In order to ensure methodological consistency with previous waves, and to allow the monitoring of ratings across the 23 aspects of service over time, the content of the 2010 questionnaire reflected that of the questionnaire used in 2006 and 2008. This content was supplemented by the inclusion of additional questions on progress against strategic objectives. A copy of the questionnaire can be found at Appendix I.

### **Implementation**

A letter was sent to each client to inform them of the research and to request their participation in the survey. The letter also contained a list of all aspects of service clients would be asked to rate within the survey to facilitate respondent understanding and to ensure the achievement of meaningful responses.

PIMR's team of executive researcher then contacted each client to invite them to participate the study. All interviewing was conducted from PIMR's on-site CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) call centre. The team at PIMR comply with the Market Research Code of Conduct and work to the standards of the Interviewer Quality Control Scheme.

All interviewing took place between the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> December. Data was processed, validated and analysed to produce mean scores and a breakdown of results for each of the key funding groups.

### ***Report format***

This report provides a detailed analysis of the findings of the 2010 client satisfaction research, alongside a comparative overview of findings from the previous two survey waves. The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Section 3. Overview
- Section 4. Funding applications
- Section 5. Contact with Council staff
- Section 6. The role of the Arts Council
- Section 7. Strategic objectives.



# 3. Overview

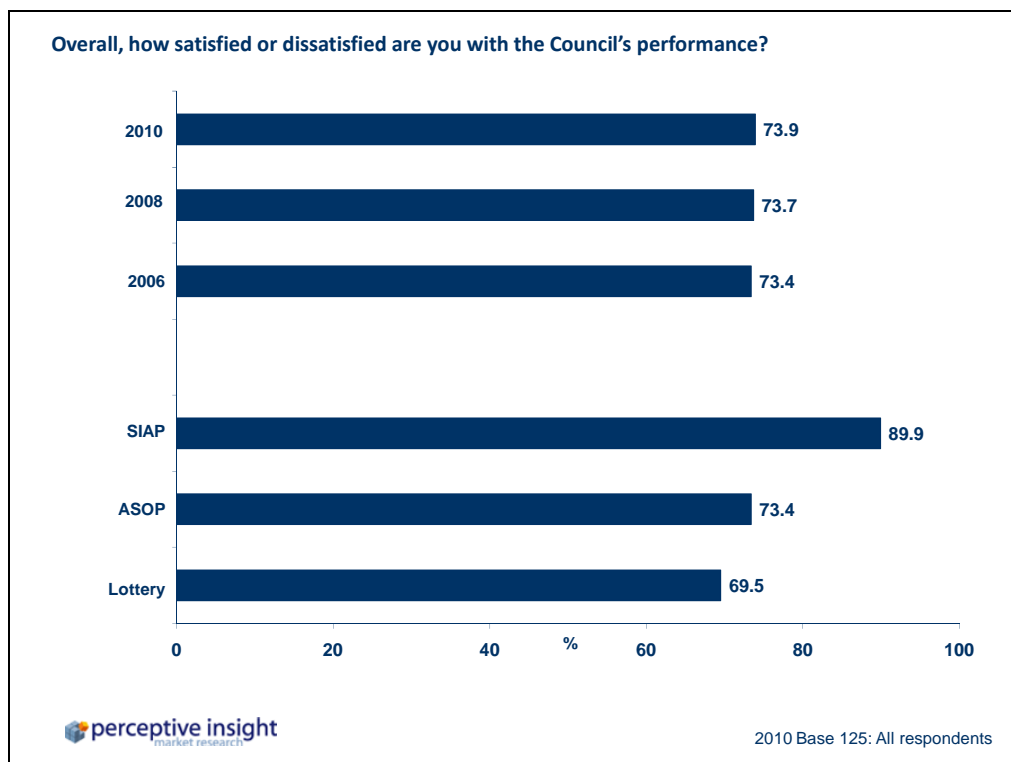
In this section we provide an overview of clients' overall satisfaction with ACNI.

## **Overall satisfaction: the Client Satisfaction Index™**

Respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the performance of ACNI on a ten-point scale. The Client Satisfaction Index™ was used to provide an overall measure of the Council's success in satisfying its clients. The index uses importance ratings to weight satisfaction ratings, resulting in a weighted average score, expressed as a percentage. A score of 100% represents total client satisfaction with every aspect of their dealings with ACNI. Using this method we are able to determine the clients' overall level of satisfaction with ACNI performance. (See Appendix III for further details on the Client Satisfaction Index™).

Based on this methodology, the Client Satisfaction Index™ score for 2010 is 73.9%. This compares favourably to 73.7% in 2008 and 73.4% in 2006. Satisfaction scores varied by funding group, with SIAP clients expressing the highest levels of satisfaction (89.9%), followed by ASOP clients (73.4%) and Lottery clients expressing the lowest levels (69.5%).

**Figure 3.1: Overall satisfaction**



### Areas of improved performance

Respondents were asked which, if any, aspects of ACNI’s performance had improved. This was an unstructured (or ‘open’) question which respondents could answer in their own words. While just less than one-third (32%) felt that there was no particular aspect of service that had improved, the highest proportion of those who provided a response reported that ACNI had improved in terms of support and advocacy (almost one-quarter (24%) of all clients). The remaining areas of service clients felt had improved were funding or funding applications (20%) and communication (21%). The client quotes and Figure 3.2 below illustrates these findings.

*“Advocacy has improved but started at a low base.”*

*“There has been a general widening of support to developing sectors, but it’s still not enough.”*

*“Online applications are easier now.”*

*“There is confidence that there is a focus on making fair decisions about funding.”*

*“I find it easier to get in touch with them and find someone to talk to.”*

*“I think their communication with the outside world seems to be getting better. It is hard to do – to reach the naturally disinterested person in the street. But I’m aware of much more advertising and more news articles. They make a good case for the Arts, and the work through the ‘keep the Arts alive’ campaign has done just that.”*

**Figure 3.2: Improved aspects of service**

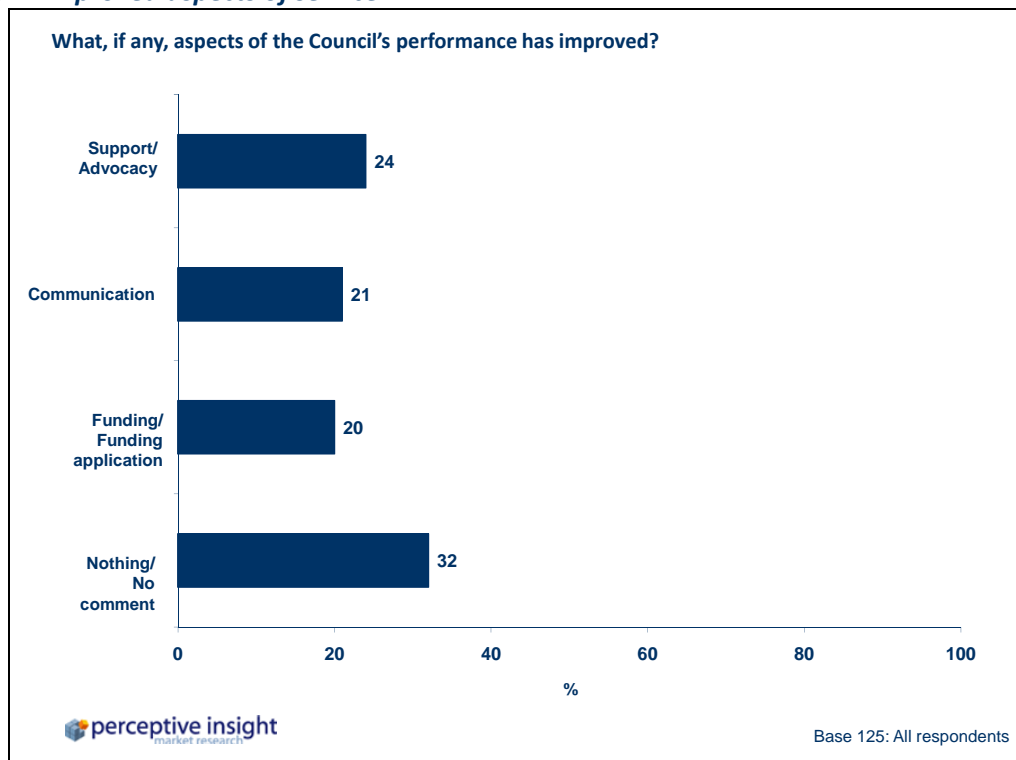


Table 3.1 details the areas of improvement across each funding group and across all clients. While Lottery, ASOP and the overall client sample were most likely to say that support and advocacy were improved, the SIAP funding group were more likely to say that funding and funding applications were most improved.

**Table 3.1: Most cited area of improvement**

<i>(Base)</i>	Lottery <i>(30)</i>	ASOP <i>(57)</i>	SIAP <i>(38)</i>	All clients <i>(125)</i>
Support/ advocacy	27%	30%	13%	24%
Communication	27%	28%	5%	21%
Funding/funding applications	13%	23%	21%	20%
More open/inclusive	13%	4%	0%	5%
Other	13%	14%	3%	10%
Nothing/no comment	20%	19%	61%	32%

### **Areas of weakened performance**

Respondents were asked which, if any, aspects of ACNI’s performance had become worse in their experience. Again this question was asked in an unstructured (or ‘open’) format allowing respondents to answer freely in their own words. The largest proportion of respondents (41%) felt that no aspect of service had become worse, reflecting positively on steady improvements made by the Council.

*“I don’t think any aspect has gotten worse.”*

Of those who felt an aspect of performance had become worse, bureaucracy of the application process was the most common response (22%).

*“There’s more time spent on form-filling and bureaucracy, and a deluge of new policies that have to be complied with... the application forms are different every year.”*

*“I think the process of applying [for funding] has become much more difficult and very administration-heavy.”*

With such mixed responses, the data suggests that while the Council should focus attention on the level of bureaucracy associated with the application process to improve the client experience, there is no single aspect of service which has deteriorated to the extent that it is affecting overall satisfaction scores. Figure 3.3 illustrates these findings.

**Figure 3.3: Weakened aspects of service**

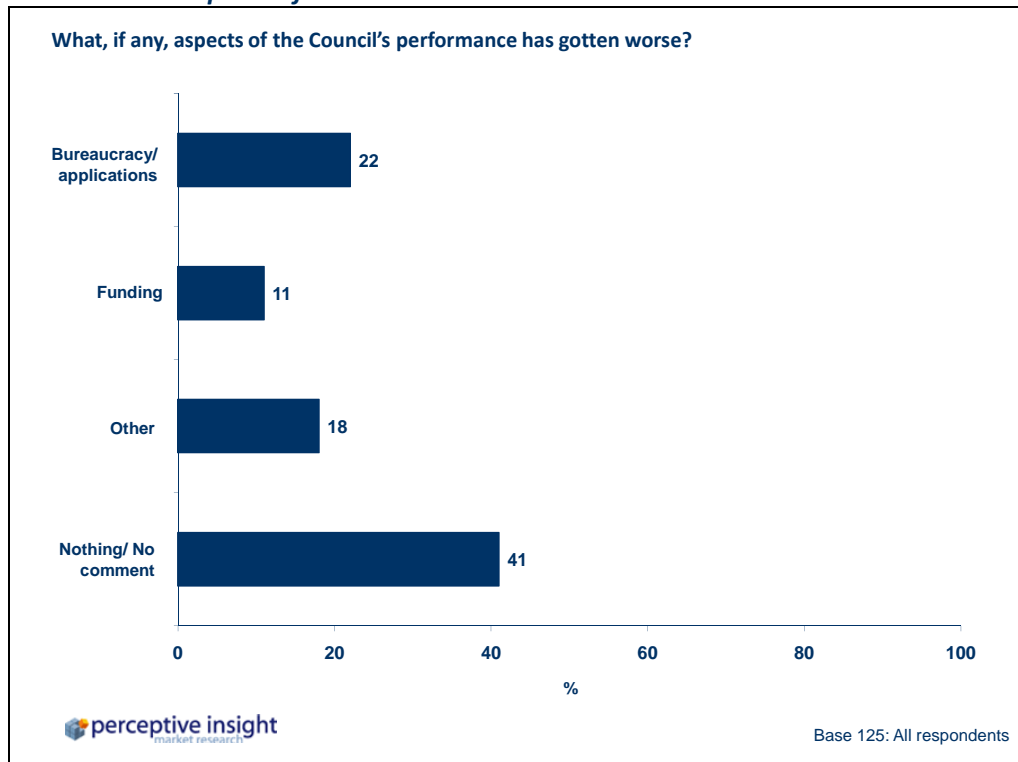


Table 3.2 illustrates the most cited areas of weakened performance across each funding group and across all clients. The bureaucracy of the application process was most cited by Lottery and ASOP clients (20% and 35% respectively). In comparison fewer SIAP clients identified any areas of service which they thought had deteriorated.

**Table 3.2: Most cited area of weakened performance**

(Base)	Lottery (30)	ASOP (57)	SIAP (38)	All clients (125)
Bureaucracy/applications	20%	35%	5%	22%
Funding	17%	11%	8%	11%
Profile/influence	7%	12%	8%	10%
Staff	7%	9%	0%	6%
Other	23%	14%	21%	18%
Nothing/no comment	33%	32%	61%	41%

# 4. Funding applications

In this section we provide a breakdown of importance and satisfaction ratings that client attributed to the following eight aspects of service related to funding applications:

- Ease of the funding application process;
- Providing advice about the application process;
- Ease of contacting someone with relevant experience;
- Clear and professional decision-making;
- Speed of making funding decisions;
- Making funds available quickly once approved;
- Providing explanations for unsuccessful funding applications; and
- Providing professional and ongoing support after funding has been granted.

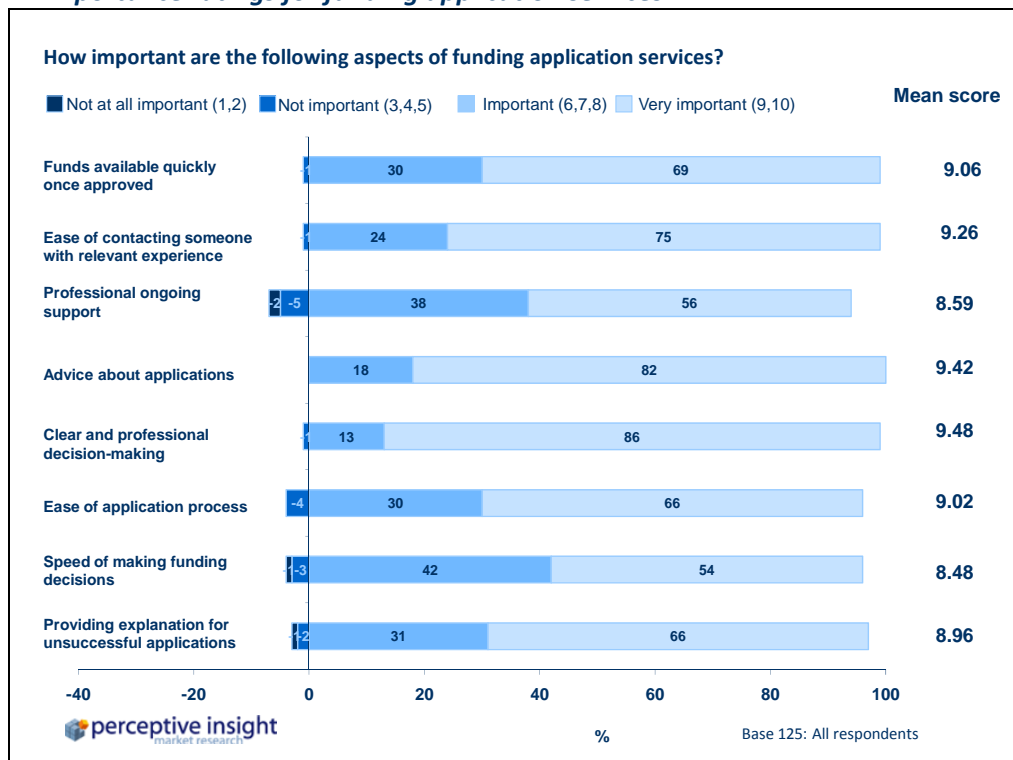
## Importance

Clients were asked to rate, on a ten-point scale, the importance of each of the eight aspects of service related to funding applications (Figure 4.1). Importance ratings were also converted into 'mean' scores to facilitate comparison across client groups and across the three years of survey findings.

Clients definitively rated clear and professional decision-making, advice about applications and ease of contacting someone with relevant experience as the three most important aspects of service within funding application services.

While providing professional and ongoing support was less likely to be rated as important (7% not at all or not important), the mean importance scores show that, on balance, the speed of making funding decisions was the least important aspect of service to client.

**Figure 4.1: Importance ratings for funding application services**



## Satisfaction

Clients were also asked to rate on a ten-point scale their satisfaction with each of the eight aspects of service related to funding applications. As shown in Figure 4.2, clients are most likely to be satisfied that funds are available quickly once approved. With a mean score of 7.70 and 87% of clients either satisfied or very satisfied, this is a very positive finding for the Council.

It is also worth noting that although the majority of clients (78%) are satisfied with the aspect which was of most importance to clients – that of clear and professional decision-making. One in five (22%) expressed dissatisfaction with this aspect of service. Similarly advice about applications was regarded the second most important aspect of service and while 80% said they were satisfied with this, one in five (20%) were dissatisfied.

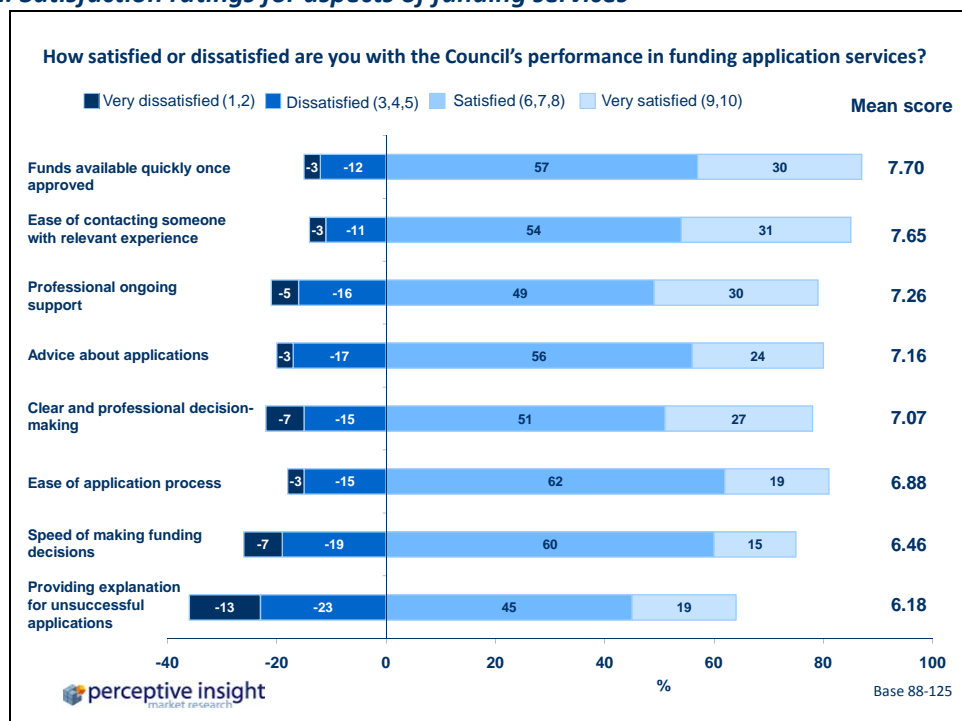
An aspect of funding application services that the Council may wish to focus on is that of providing explanations for unsuccessful applications. Over one-third (36%) of clients were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with this part of ACNI’s service, and the mean score of 6.18 suggests that there is potential to improve this aspect of service.

*“If you are unsuccessful you just get a letter, but it doesn’t give any explanation about why.”*

*“Nothing is put on paper, you are just told on the phone.”*

*“We have had unsuccessful applications and, despite contact, we don’t hear anything back from them.”*

**Figure 4.2: Satisfaction ratings for aspects of funding services**



By analysing the mean satisfaction ratings in terms of funding groups, we can determine in which elements of funding services the Council are meeting the expectations of each of these groups (as shown in Table 4.1).

For lottery funded clients, satisfaction was highest with how easy it is to contact someone with relevant experience (7.57), one of the aspects identified as being of most importance to clients. Providing explanations for unsuccessful applications was the area of lowest satisfaction for Lottery clients (5.96), as for the client group as a whole. For ASOP clients, providing professional and ongoing contact after funding is granted was the area of highest satisfaction (7.85), whilst providing explanations for unsuccessful applications (5.88) was again the area of lowest satisfaction. Finally, SIAP clients were most likely to be satisfied with funding services in relation to making funds available quickly once approved (7.73), while they were least likely to be satisfied with the provision of professional and ongoing contact after funding is granted (6.79), perhaps reflecting the greater requirement for support amongst the individual artists.

**Table 4.1: Satisfaction means by funding group**

	Lottery	ASOP	SIAP	Overall
How quickly funds are available once funding has been approved	7.41	7.83	7.73	7.70
How easy it is to contact someone with relevant experience	7.57	7.79	7.50	7.65
Providing professional and ongoing contact after funding is granted	6.73	7.85	6.79	7.26
Providing advice about the application process	6.80	7.40	7.09	7.16
How clear and professional the Council's decision making is	7.07	6.76	7.56	7.07
That it is easy to apply for funding	6.60	6.77	7.26	6.88
How quickly decisions about funding are made	6.10	6.37	6.87	6.46
Providing an explanation for unsuccessful funding applications	5.96	5.88	7.00	6.18

In comparing the 2010 findings with those of previous years, it is interesting to note a trend emerging: the aspect of service relating to how quickly funds become available once approved has been the area of highest satisfaction in each of the three waves (7.70 in 2010; 9.59 in 2008; and 7.63 in 2006). Similarly, providing explanations for unsuccessful applications has been the area of highest dissatisfaction for all three waves (6.18 in 2010; 6.33 in 2008; and 6.98 in 2006). Table 4.2 below shows the mean scores for all funding application services across all three waves of the client satisfaction research.

**Table 4.2: Satisfaction means by year**

	2006	2008	2010
How quickly funds are available once funding has been approved	7.63	9.59	7.70
How easy it is to contact someone with relevant experience	7.31	7.58	7.65
Providing professional and ongoing contact after funding is granted	7.18	6.84	7.26
Providing advice about the application process	7.18	7.09	7.16
How clear and professional the Council's decision making is	7.31	7.10	7.07
That it is easy to apply for funding	6.99	7.84	6.88
How quickly decisions about funding are made	7.15	7.29	6.46
Providing an explanation for unsuccessful funding applications	6.98	6.33	6.18

### **Areas to focus on**

With lowest satisfaction ratings for two of the three funding groups in the 2010 survey, and with lowest satisfaction for the overall client group across all three waves of the client satisfaction research, improving the provision of explanations for unsuccessful applications is a key area to focus improvements on. Although this aspect of service comes sixth out of eight categories in terms of importance, with a mean score of 8.96 it is still considered as highly important to clients in terms of their service expectations.



# 5. Contact with Council staff

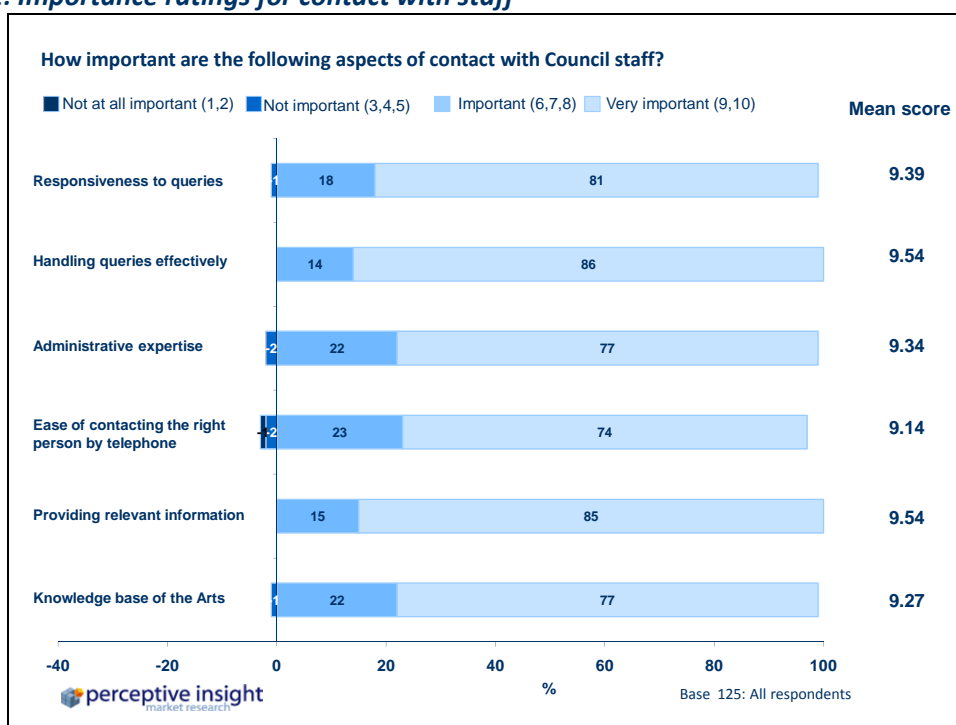
In this section we provide a breakdown of importance and satisfaction ratings attached to the following six aspects of service related to contact with Council staff:

- Administrative expertise;
- Knowledge base of the Arts;
- Providing relevant information;
- Handling queries effectively;
- Ease of contacting the right person by telephone; and
- Responsiveness to queries.

## Importance

Clients were asked to rate the importance of each of six aspects of service relating to contact with Council staff. As shown in Figure 5.1, providing relevant information and handling queries effectively are both rated equally highest in terms of importance with a means score of 9.54 with all clients (100%) rating these aspects as either important or very important. By contrast, ease of contacting the right person by telephone, while still of importance to clients, received the lowest importance rating within this category, with a mean score of 9.14 and 3% judging it to be either not important or not at all important.

**Figure 5.1: Importance ratings for contact with staff**



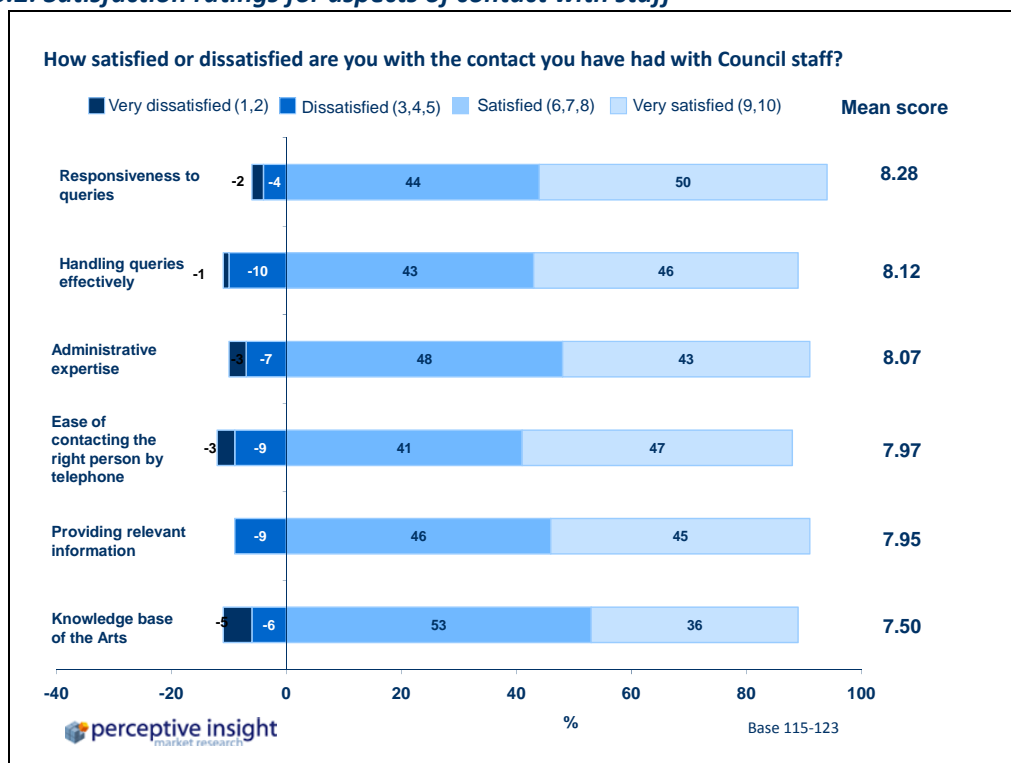
## Satisfaction

Clients were also asked to rate their satisfaction with elements of service relating to contact with Council staff. A breakdown of these responses is shown in Figure 5.2. The survey found that satisfaction was highest in relation to responsiveness to queries, with 94% of clients either satisfied or very satisfied with this aspect of service, and a mean satisfaction score of 8.28 awarded. Clients were least satisfied with Council staff’s knowledge base of the Arts, with 11% either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and a mean satisfaction score of 7.50 given.

*“There should be some kind of system whereby Arts Council staff attend events and functions because it is a faceless process and no relationships are built. How do they get the knowledge?”*

*“There is nobody in the Arts Council in the area that we work who has knowledge of the art form that we perform.”*

**Figure 5.2: Satisfaction ratings for aspects of contact with staff**



Analysing the mean satisfaction ratings in terms of funding groups (as shown in Table 5.1), a slightly different picture emerges. For Lottery funded clients, administrative expertise is the area of highest satisfaction (7.97) while the area of lowest satisfaction reflects the overall findings with staff knowledge base of the Arts given the lowest rating (7.17). Findings for ASOP funded clients mirror the overall findings, with responsiveness to queries scoring highest (8.52) and staff knowledge base of the Arts scoring lowest (7.44). SIAP funded clients, as Lottery funded clients, reflect overall findings in terms of the highest but not the lowest area of satisfaction. Providing relevant information received the highest satisfaction ratings (8.37) while staff knowledge base of the Arts received the lowest (7.90).

**Table 5.1: Satisfaction means by funding group**

	Lottery	ASOP	SIAP	Overall
Responsiveness to queries	7.79	8.52	8.31	8.28
Handling queries effectively	7.70	8.29	8.24	8.12
Staff expertise in terms of administrative procedures	7.97	8.02	8.26	8.07
Ease of contacting the right person by phone	7.41	8.29	7.94	7.97
Providing relevant information	7.40	7.98	8.37	7.95
Knowledge base of the Arts	7.17	7.44	7.90	7.50

Looking at the mean satisfaction ratings over time (as shown in Table 5.2 below), the area of highest satisfaction has changed in the most recent wave, but the area of lowest satisfaction has remained consistent across all three waves. The areas of highest satisfaction across the waves have been responsiveness to queries in 2010 (8.28), and ease of contacting the right person by telephone in 2008 (9.11) and 2006 (7.83). Staff knowledge base of the Arts has repeatedly been given the lowest satisfaction ratings across all three client satisfaction surveys (7.50 in 2010; 7.24 in 2008; and 7.19 in 2006).

**Table 5.2: Satisfaction means by year**

	2006	2008	2010
Responsiveness to queries	7.69	8.31	8.28
The effectiveness of query handling	7.65	7.54	8.12
Administrative expertise	7.23	7.68	8.07
Ease of contacting the right person by phone	7.83	9.11	7.97
Quality and relevance of information provided by staff	7.38	8.13	7.95
Knowledge base of the arts	7.19	7.24	7.50

### **Areas to focus on**

The areas of highest importance to clients, those of providing relevant information and handling queries effectively were not rated highest or lowest in terms of satisfaction, with mean scores of 7.95 and 8.12 respectively. This indicates that while performance is not poorly rated, there is scope to improve these aspects of service which clients have identified of most importance.

The area of lowest satisfaction across all three waves has been staff knowledge base of the Arts (7.50 in 2010; 7.24 in 2008; and 7.19 in 2006). While this aspect did not receive the highest importance rating, the mean importance score was 9.27 indicating that it is of high importance to clients.

## 6. The role of the Arts Council

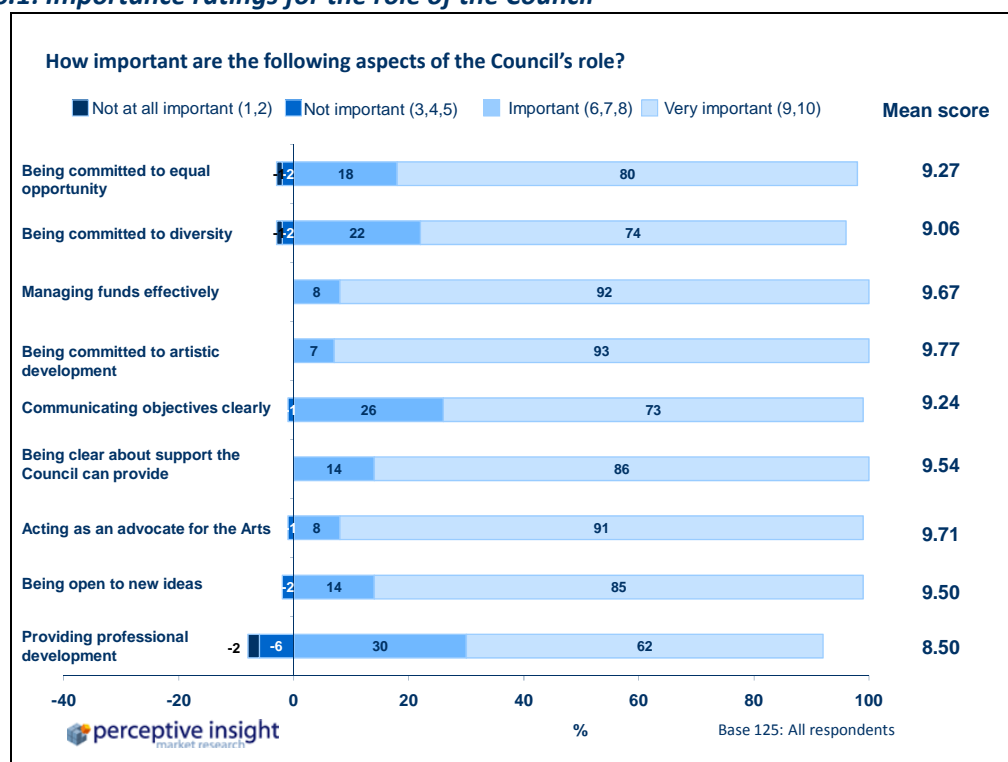
In this section we provide a breakdown of importance and satisfaction ratings attached to the following nine aspects of service related to the role of the Arts Council:

- Communicating Council objectives clearly;
- Managing funds effectively;
- Being clear about the support the Council can provide;
- Being committed to equal opportunity;
- Being committed to diversity;
- Being open to new ideas;
- Being committed to artistic development;
- Acting as an advocate for the Arts; and
- Providing professional development.

### Importance

Clients were asked to rate the importance of all nine aspects of ACNI's service related to the role of the Arts Council. Within this category, the area of greatest importance to clients is being committed to artistic development, with a mean score of 9.77 and all clients (100%) judging this to be either important or very important. This was the highest importance score attached to any element of service across the board. Conversely, actually providing this professional development was judged to be the least important aspect of the role of the Council, with a mean score of 8.50 and 8% of clients suggesting this was not important or not at all important. Figure 6.1 below illustrates these findings.

**Figure 6.1: Importance ratings for the role of the Council**



## Satisfaction

The satisfaction ratings awarded for this category are shown in Figure 6.2, below. The figure shows that being committed to equal opportunity is the area of highest satisfaction, with 93% of clients surveyed either satisfied or very satisfied with the Council’s performance in this area, and a mean satisfaction score of 8.51. This was the highest satisfaction score assigned to any aspect of service.

Providing professional development is the area of lowest satisfaction within the category, with over one-quarter (28%) of clients either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with this aspect of service, and a means satisfaction score of 6.69 awarded.

*“I don’t think they allow you to grow or develop as a company.”*

*“There is room for improvement. Developing artists should be the main emphasis and it isn’t.”*

It is also worth noting that 23% expressed dissatisfaction with ACNI being open to new ideas and 16% with regard to acting as an advocate for the Arts.

*“It takes a while for them to respond to different approaches in the Arts. Once they do, they’re generally ok, but they’re a very conservative organisation at heart.”*

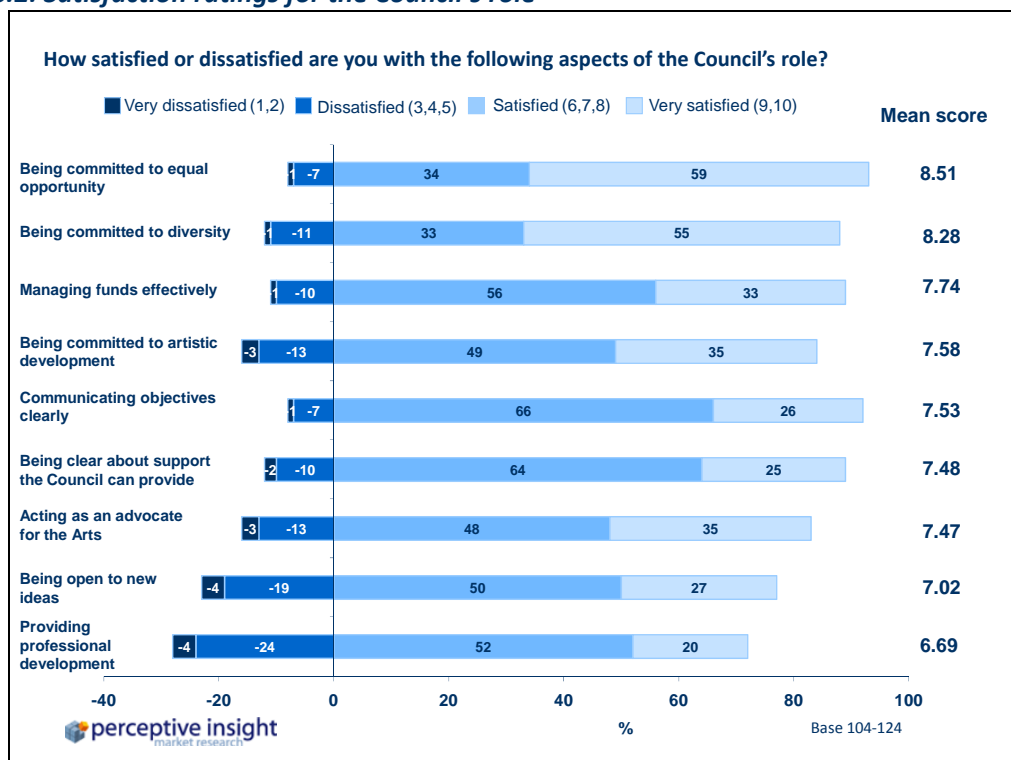
*“They need to be more open to contemporary work and less experienced artists.”*

A further 16% were dissatisfied with ACNI being committed to artistic development, the aspect that was regarded as being of most importance.

*“They seem out of touch with what’s happening. They have funded some new developments, but overall [artistic development] is very poor.”*

*“I think there are certain programmes you can get onto but they’re a one-off, grants for individual artists are only going part-way.”*

**Figure 6.2: Satisfaction ratings for the Council’s role**



Analysing the mean satisfaction ratings in terms of funding groups (as shown in Table 6.1 below), reveals a trend across all groups in terms of the area of highest satisfaction and most groups in terms of the area of lowest satisfaction. As with the overall client group, all funding groups were most satisfied with the Council performance of its role in terms of being committed to equal opportunity (Lottery 8.19; ASOP 8.42; and SIAP 9.00). Again in line with the overall findings, Lottery and ASOP funded clients were least satisfied with the Council’s provision of professional development (Lottery 6.43; and ASOP 6.12). SIAP funded clients were the notable exception, being least satisfied with the Council being open to new ideas (7.29).

**Table 6.1: Satisfaction means by funding group**

	Lottery	ASOP	SIAP	Overall
Being committed to equal opportunity	8.19	8.42	9.00	8.51
Being committed to diversity	8.00	8.15	8.82	8.28
Managing funds effectively	7.26	7.65	8.27	7.74
Being committed to artistic development	7.69	7.19	8.08	7.58
Communicating Council objectives clearly	7.69	7.26	7.83	7.53
Being clear about the support the Council can provide	7.10	7.55	7.66	7.48
Acting as an advocate for the Arts	7.39	7.33	7.75	7.47
Being open to new ideas	7.17	6.75	7.29	7.02
Providing professional development	6.43	6.12	7.71	6.69

Looking at mean satisfaction ratings across time, as shown in Table 6.2 below, shows some emerging trends in terms of high satisfaction with the Council’s commitment to equal opportunity and low satisfaction in terms of providing professional development. Being committed to equal opportunity was awarded highest satisfaction ratings in 2010 (8.51) and 2006 (8.19), but not in 2008 when highest ratings were given to acting as an advocate for the Arts (8.73). Providing professional development was given lowest satisfaction ratings in 2010 (6.69) and 2008 (6.60), but not in 2006 when communicating council objectives clearly was given the lowest satisfaction rating (6.79).

**Table 6.2: Satisfaction means by year**

	2006	2008	2010
Being committed to equal opportunity	8.19	8.49	8.51
Being committed to diversity	7.41	7.86	8.28
Managing funds effectively	7.54	6.68	7.74
Being committed to artistic development	7.20	7.40	7.58
Communicating Council objectives clearly	6.79	7.28	7.53
Being clear about the support the Council can provide	7.11	7.80	7.48
Acting as an advocate for the Arts	6.97	8.73	7.47
Being open to new ideas	7.01	8.59	7.02
Providing professional development	6.83	6.60	6.69

### **Areas to focus on**

It might at first seem illogical that the survey found that being committed to artistic development is the most important aspect of the Council's role and that providing this professional development was the least important aspect service in this area. However, these findings indicate that, in the view of clients, the Council has a role to play in supporting artistic development rather than in directly providing such services. It is also important to note that the Council's commitment to artistic development was assigned the highest importance rating of any aspect of service, and was assigned third place in the overall ranking of aspects of service.

*"[Providing professional development] shouldn't be the role of the Council, they should only facilitate professional development."*

*"Sometimes we get things through the Arts Council but they are done by the Arts Council. I think there isn't a proactive approach to investigating what organisations need [in terms of] help and support... and then to help find sources."*

These findings also suggest that focusing on improving the area of lowest satisfaction in this category, that of providing professional development, is unlikely to raise overall client satisfaction levels. The findings further suggest that focusing more on showing the Council's commitment to this area – perhaps by acting as an intermediary or sign-posting service between artists and the professional development they require – would be more in line with client's service expectations.

# 7. Strategic objectives

In this section we provide a breakdown of satisfaction ratings attached to 11 aspects of service related to the strategic objectives that ACNI work to achieve. With so many aspects of service, this section has been divided into two main parts as listed below.

## Artists and infrastructure:

- Improving recognition of the contribution artists and arts organisations make to society;
- Influencing the government in terms of the contribution artists and arts organisations make to achieving government objectives;
- Gaining broad acceptance of the need for increased funding for the Arts in Northern Ireland; and
- Achieving international recognition for the Arts in Northern Ireland.

## Profile and presence:

- Improving the well-being of individual artists;
- Strengthening and developing arts organisations;
- Strengthening and developing the arts infrastructure (such as cultural buildings and events);
- Expanding the range of opportunities for people to enjoy the arts;
- Expanding the range of opportunities for people to take part in the arts;
- Encouraging more young people to experience the arts;
- Becoming a more client-focused organisation.



## Artists and infrastructure: Satisfaction

Clients were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with ACNI’s performance against a range of strategic objectives. Of the areas relating to artists and infrastructure, clients were most satisfied with the Council’s performance in terms of improving recognition of the contribution artists and arts organisations make to society, with eight out of ten respondents (81%) either satisfied or very satisfied and a mean score of 6.72.

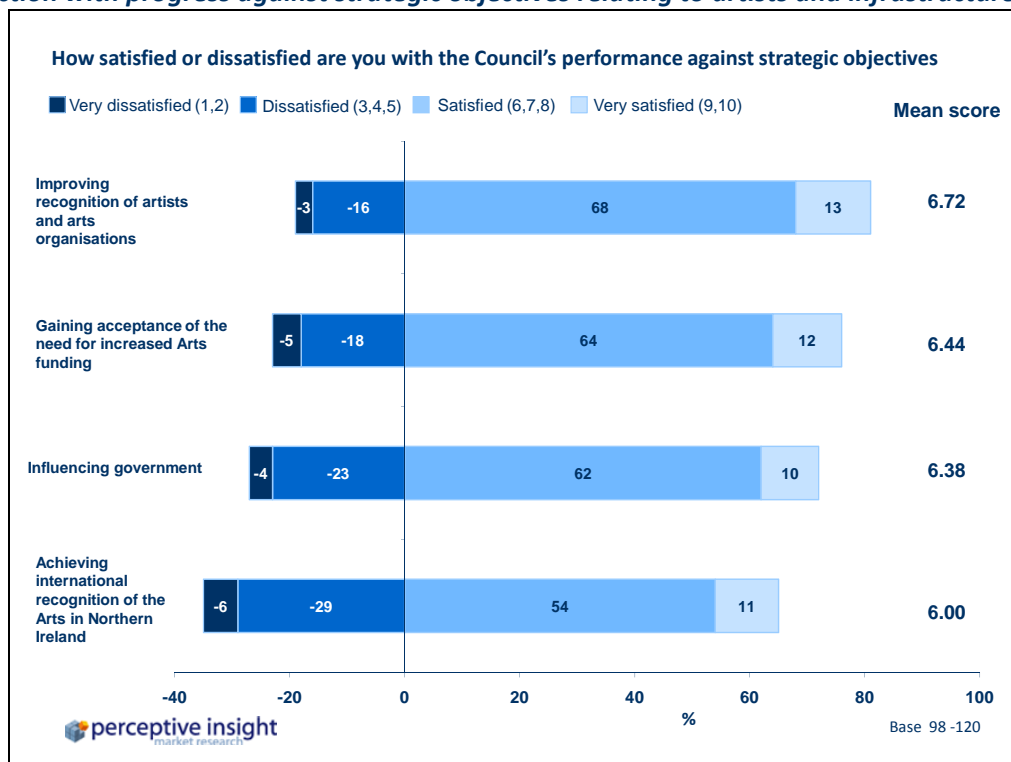
Clients were least satisfied with the Council in terms of achieving international recognition for the Arts in Northern Ireland, with one-third of respondents (36%) either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and a mean satisfaction score of 6.00 given (Figure 7.1).

*“It’s great for a certain number, they need to give others a chance to get on that wagon.”*

*“I think they’ve done as much as they could with the meagre resources available.”*

*“I believe there should be a much higher level of international recognition, and I’m not aware what the Arts Council are doing to improve this in my area.... I recognise it takes more money to do that.”*

**Figure 7.1:**  
**Satisfaction with progress against strategic objectives relating to artists and infrastructure**



Analysing the satisfaction means for this category by funding group reveals two main trends. Firstly, improving recognition of the contribution artists and arts organisations make to society was not only the area of highest satisfaction overall (6.72), but also for each of the funding groups (Lottery 6.89; ASOP 6.93; SIAP 6.12). Secondly, achieving international recognition for the Arts in Northern Ireland was the area of lowest satisfaction overall (6.00) and for the ASOP and SIAP funded clients (6.12 and 5.56 respectively). For Lottery funded clients, influencing the government in terms of the contribution artists and arts organisations make to achieving government objectives was the area of lowest satisfaction (6.22).

**Table 7.1: Satisfaction means by funding group**

	Lottery	ASOP	SIAP	Overall
Improving recognition of the contribution artists and arts organisations make to society	6.89	6.93	6.12	6.72
Gaining broad acceptance of the need for increased funding for the Arts in Northern Ireland	6.32	6.81	5.91	6.44
Influencing the government in terms of the contribution artists and arts organisations make to achieving government objectives	6.22	6.66	5.90	6.38
Achieving international recognition for the Arts in Northern Ireland	6.32	6.12	5.56	6.00

## Profile and presence: Satisfaction

Of the aspects of service relating to profile and presence, clients are most satisfied with the Council's performance in terms of expanding opportunities for people to enjoy the Arts. With 86% either satisfied or very satisfied with this aspect of service and a mean satisfaction score of 7.18, the Council can be confident that its clients perceive it to be fulfilling this strategic objective.

Lowest satisfaction ratings, however, were assigned to the area of improving the well-being of individual artists. Over one-quarter (26%) of respondents reported being either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with this aspect, resulting in a mean satisfaction score of 6.42.

*"Artists still struggle for their livelihoods and inclusion in Arts Council programmes is becoming increasingly more difficult."*

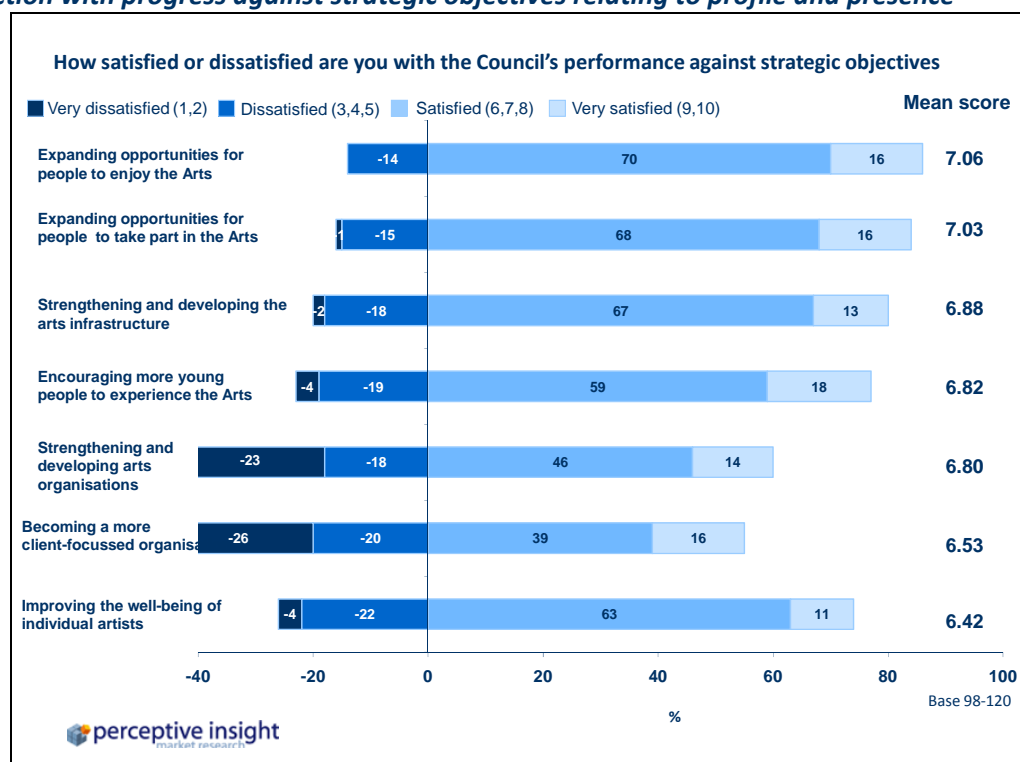
*"While the individual funding available is very good, there is a feeling that that is the only relationship [individual artists] have with the Arts Council – as a funder – and I think that should change."*

There was also a high degree of dissatisfaction in relation to the role of ACNI in strengthening and developing arts organisations (41% either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied) and it becoming a more client focused organisation (46% either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied).

*"I think they don't support the organisations in the middle who are building the arts infrastructure here."*

*"I think they have started on a very good road there, they are in the early stages of figuring out how to do it themselves. If it was a few months ago I would have given it a lower score. The changes in middle and senior management are to the benefit."*

**Figure 8.2:**  
**Satisfaction with progress against strategic objectives relating to profile and presence**



Analysing the satisfaction means by funding group reveals a trend in terms of areas of satisfaction alongside differences in terms of areas of dissatisfaction. Expanding the range of opportunities for people to enjoy the arts was given highest satisfaction ratings overall (7.06), and by all three funding groups (Lottery 7.18; ASOP 7.16; and SIAP 6.81). The overall finding that improving the well-being of individual artists was given the lowest overall satisfaction scores (6.42) is mirrored only by ASOP funded clients (6.25). For Lottery and SIAP funded clients, the area of lowest satisfaction was becoming a more client-focused organisation (6.31 and 6.21 respectively). Table 7.2 overleaf shows these mean scores by funding group.

**Table 7.2: Satisfaction means by funding group**

	Lottery	ASOP	SIAP	Overall
Expanding the range of opportunities for people to enjoy the arts	7.18	7.16	6.81	7.06
Expanding the range of opportunities for people to take part in the arts	7.07	7.18	6.72	7.03
Strengthening and developing the arts infrastructure	6.86	7.09	6.55	6.88
Encouraging more young people to experience the arts	7.00	7.06	6.31	6.82
Strengthening and developing arts organisations	6.90	6.91	6.54	6.80
Becoming a more client-focused organisation	6.31	6.79	6.21	6.53
Improving the well-being of individual artists	6.38	6.25	6.69	6.42

### **Areas to focus on**

Overall, taking all clients and all elements of performance against strategic objectives into consideration, satisfaction with the Council’s performance was lowest in terms of achieving international recognition for the Arts in Northern Ireland, with one-third of respondents (36%) either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and a mean satisfaction score of 6.00 given. Additional focus on this area may help to increase levels of satisfaction in this regard.

# Appendix I – Survey questionnaire

Good Morning/ Afternoon/ Evening. May I speak with \_\_\_\_\_ [RESPONDENT NAME] please?

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling from Perceptive Insight research. We are conducting independent research on behalf of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. You may have received a letter telling you about this research and letting you know that we might call?

Letter received?	Yes	Go to QA
	No	Go to QB

QA: That's great. Would you be willing to take part in this research? Depending on your answers, the interview should take no more than xx minutes to complete, and it will help the Arts Council to understand what is important to its clients. You might want to have your information letter to hand to make the interview as easy and as quick as possible.

QB: That's no problem. If you're willing to take part in the research I can tell you about it just now and take you through the interview.

Yes	Continue
Not just now	Offer soft appointment or hard appointment
No - refusal	Thank and close

Before we start I'd just like to reassure you that your answers will remain anonymous and will only be used when joined with those of other survey participants to provide an overview of people's opinions.


Funding Group	SIAP	1
	ASOP	2
	LOTTERY	3
Unique Ref		

## Section A: Funding Applications

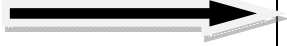
First I'd like to ask you a few questions about the way the Arts Council processes funding applications. All the questions use a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest.

I'll ask firstly how important you think that each part of that process is, and then how you feel that the Arts Council is performing in those areas. Please note that these questions are about how the Council handles the applications, rather than the outcome of those applications or the decision made.

**Q.1** Using a scale of 1-10 where 1 is extremely **unimportant** and 10 is extremely **important**, please tell me how important you think each of the following are:

		Not at all Imp									Ext Imp
A	That it is easy to apply for funding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
B	That the Council gives advice about the application process	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
C	That it is easy to contact someone with relevant experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
D	That decision making is clear and professional	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
E	That decisions about funding are quick	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
F	That once funding has been approved, funds are available quickly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
G	That an explanation is given for unsuccessful funding applications	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
H	That professional and ongoing contact are provided after funding is granted	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**Q.2** And now, I'll list each of those areas again and ask you to rate your experience of the Council's **performance** in each. Again, please use a scale of 1-10, where 1 is extremely dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied, or tell me if you do not have enough experience to rate that area. How would you rate the Council's performance in terms of:

		Ext Dis s									Ex t Sa t	N/ A
A	How easy it is to apply for funding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
B	Providing advice about the application process	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
C	How easy it is to contact someone with relevant experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
D	How clear and professional the Council's decision making is	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

E	How quickly decisions about funding are made	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
F	How quickly funds are available once funding has been approved	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
G	Providing an explanation for unsuccessful funding applications	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
H	Providing professional and ongoing contact after funding is granted	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

**[All scores of 5 or below at Q2 be routed directly into Q3]**


**Q.3** And why have you rated performance low in this area?

A	How easy it is to apply for funding	
B	Providing advice about the application process	
C	How easy it is to contact someone with relevant experience	
D	How clear and professional the Council's decision making is	
E	How quickly decisions about funding are made	
F	How quickly funds are available once funding has been approved	
G	Providing an explanation for unsuccessful funding applications	
H	Providing professional and ongoing contact after funding is granted	

**Section B: Contact with Council Staff**

Now I'll ask you about contact with Council staff, again starting by asking you how important different areas are to you, and then asking you to rate the Council's performance in those areas.


**Q.4** Using a scale of 1-10 where 1 is extremely **unimportant** and 10 is extremely **important**, please tell me how important you think each of the following are:

		Not at all Imp											Ext Imp
A	That staff carry out administrative procedures with expertise	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
B	That staff have a knowledge base of the Arts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
C	That staff provide relevant information	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
D	That staff handle queries effectively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
E	That you can easily contact the right member of	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		



	staff by telephone											
F	That staff are responsive to queries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

**Q.5** And now, I'll list each of those areas again and ask you to rate your experience of the Council's **performance** in each. Again, please use a scale of 1-10, where 1 is extremely dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied, or tell me if you do not have enough experience to rate that area. How would you rate the Council's performance in terms of:

		Ext Dis s									Ex t Sa t	N/ A
A	The expertise with which staff carry out administrative procedures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
B	The knowledge base of the Arts that staff have	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
C	The relevance of information provided by staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
D	The effectiveness of staff query handling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
E	Being able to easily contact the right member of staff by telephone	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
F	The responsiveness of staff to queries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

**[All scores of 5 or below at Q5 be routed directly into Q6]**


**Q.6** And why have you rated performance low in this area?

A	The expertise with which staff carry out administrative procedures	
B	The knowledge base of the Arts that staff have	
C	The relevance of information provided by staff	
D	The effectiveness of staff query handling	
E	Being able to easily contact the right member of staff by telephone	
F	The responsiveness of staff to queries	


## Section C: The role of the Arts Council

Now I'll ask you about the role the Arts Council has, again starting by asking you how important different areas are to you, and then asking you to rate the Council's performance in those areas.

**Q.7** Using a scale of 1-10 where 1 is extremely **unimportant** and 10 is extremely **important**, please tell me how important you think each of the following are:

		Not at all Imp									Ext Imp
A	Communicating Council objectives clearly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
B	Managing funds effectively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
C	Being clear about the support the Council can provide	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
D	Being committed to equal opportunity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
E	Being committed to diversity (by diversity I mean reflecting the different elements of contemporary society in the Arts)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
F	Being open to new ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
G	Being committed to artistic development	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
H	Acting as an advocate for the Arts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I	Providing professional development	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**Q.8** And now, I'll list each of those areas again and ask you to rate your experience of the Council's **performance** in each. Again, please use a scale of 1-10, where 1 is extremely dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied, or tell me if you do not have enough experience to rate that area. How would you rate the Council's performance in terms of:

		Ext Dis									Ext Sat	N/A
A	Communicating Council objectives clearly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
B	Managing funds effectively	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
C	Being clear about the support the Council can provide	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
D	Being committed to equal opportunity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
E	Being committed to diversity (by diversity I mean reflecting the different elements of contemporary society in the Arts)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
F	Being open to new ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
G	Being committed to artistic development	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
H	Acting as an advocate for the Arts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

I	Providing professional development	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
---	------------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----

**[All scores of 5 or below at Q8 be routed directly into Q9]**

**Q.9** And why have you rated performance low in this area?

A	Communicating Council objectives clearly	
B	Managing funds effectively	
C	Being clear about the support the Council can provide	
D	Being committed to equal opportunity	
E	Being committed to diversity (by diversity I mean reflecting the different elements of contemporary society in the Arts)	
F	Being open to new ideas	
G	Being committed to artistic development	
H	Acting as an advocate for the Arts	
I	Providing professional development	

### **Section D: Ranking areas of service**

**Q.10** Now I'll ask you to rank your 'top 5' from the areas I've mentioned so far. I can repeat the list all the areas I have asked you about so far or you may want to refer to your information letter.

In funding we had:

Code	Area
1.	That it is easy to apply for funding
2.	That the Council gives advice about the application process
3.	That it is easy to contact someone with relevant experience
4.	That decision making is clear and professional
5.	That decisions about funding are quick
6.	That once funding has been approved, funds are available quickly
7.	That an explanation is given for unsuccessful funding applications
8.	That professional and ongoing contact are provided after funding is granted

In contact with council staff we had:

Code	Area
9.	That staff carry out administrative procedures with expertise
10.	That staff have a knowledge base of the Arts
11.	That staff provide relevant information
12.	That staff handle queries effectively
13.	That you can easily contact the right member of staff by telephone
14.	That staff are responsive to queries

In the role of the Arts council we had:


Code	Area
15.	Communicating Council objectives clearly
16.	Managing funds effectively
17.	Being clear about the support the Council can provide
18.	Being committed to equal opportunity
19.	Being committed to diversity (by diversity I mean reflecting the different elements of contemporary society in the Arts)
20.	Being open to new ideas
21.	Being committed to artistic development
22.	Acting as an advocate for the Arts
23.	Providing professional development

Starting with your most important, which of these areas is most important to you? And the next [etc. Up to 5]

Rank	Code
1 (highest/most important)	
2	
3	
4	
5	

## Section E: Strategic objectives

**Q.11** Thank you, just a few more questions to go. Now I'd like to ask you to rate the Council's performance in terms of their strategic objectives. Again, please use a scale of 1-10, where 1 is extremely dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied, or tell me if you do not have enough experience to rate that area. How would you rate the Council's performance in terms of:

		Ext Dis s									Ext Sa t	N/ A
A	Improving recognition of the contribution artists and arts organisations make to society	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
B	Influencing the government in terms of the contribution artists and arts organisations make to achieving government objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
C	Gaining broad acceptance of the need for increased funding for the Arts in Northern Ireland	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
D	Achieving international recognition for the Arts in Northern Ireland	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
E	Improving the well-being of individual artists	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
F	Strengthening and developing arts organisations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
G	Strengthening and developing the arts infrastructure (such as cultural buildings and events)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
H	Expanding the range of opportunities for people to enjoy the arts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I	Expanding the range of opportunities for people to take part in the arts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
J	Encouraging more young people to experience the arts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
K	Becoming a more client-focused organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

**[All scores of 5 or below at Q11 be routed directly into Q12]**

**Q.12** And why have you rated performance low in this area?

A	Improving recognition of the contribution artists and arts organisations make to society	
B	Influencing the government in terms of the contribution artists and arts organisations make to achieving government objectives	
C	Gaining broad acceptance of the need for increased funding for the Arts in Northern Ireland	
D	Achieving international recognition for the	

	Arts in Northern Ireland	
E	Improving the well-being of individual artists	
F	Strengthening and developing arts organisations	
G	Strengthening and developing the arts infrastructure (such as cultural buildings and events)	
H	Expanding the range of opportunities for people to enjoy the arts	
I	Expanding the range of opportunities for people to take part in the arts	
J	Encouraging more young people to experience the arts	
K	Becoming a more client-focused organisation	

**Section F: Overall satisfaction**

**Q.13** And finally, please tell me how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland’s performance overall. Again, please use a scale of 1-10, where 1 is extremely dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied.

	Ext Dis s									Ex t Sa t	N/ A
Performance overall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

**Q.14** What, if any, aspect of the Arts Council’s performance has improved?

**Q.15** What, if any, aspect of the Arts Council’s performance has gotten worse?

**THANK AND CLOSE:** Thank you very much for taking part in this research.

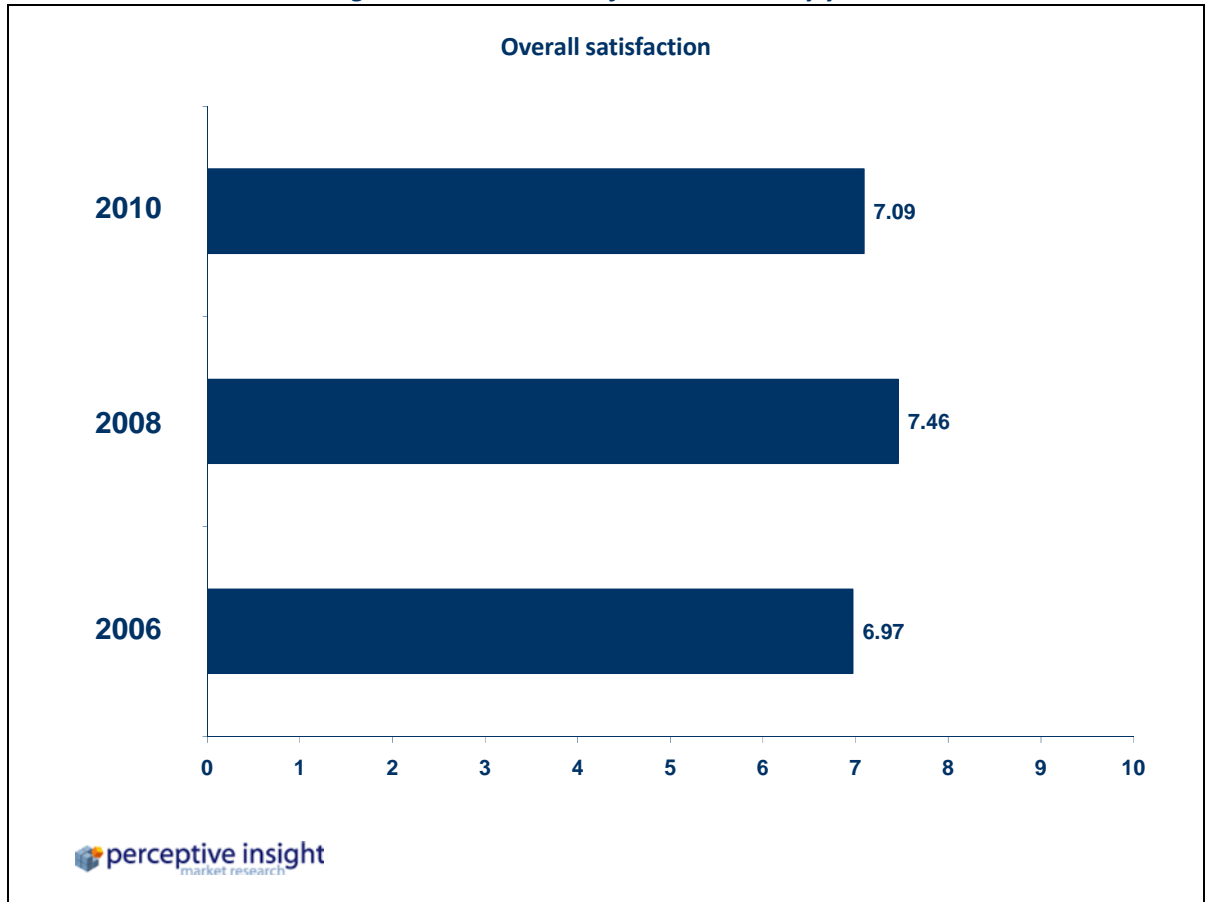
I declare that this interview was conducted within the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct and according to instruction and that the respondent was unknown to me. I understand that all information given to me must be kept confidential.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix II – Comparative means charts

**Figure A1: Overall satisfaction means by year**





**Figure A2: Funding satisfaction means by year**

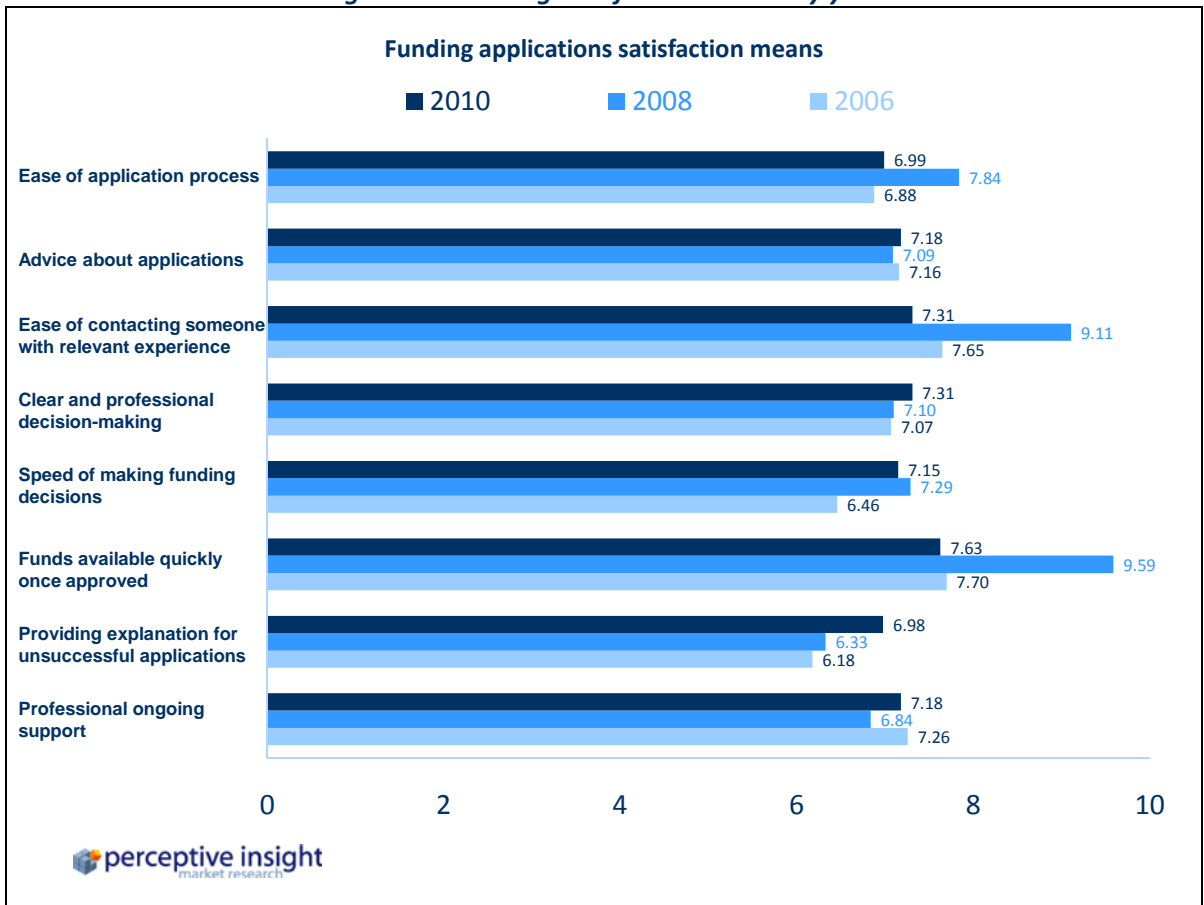
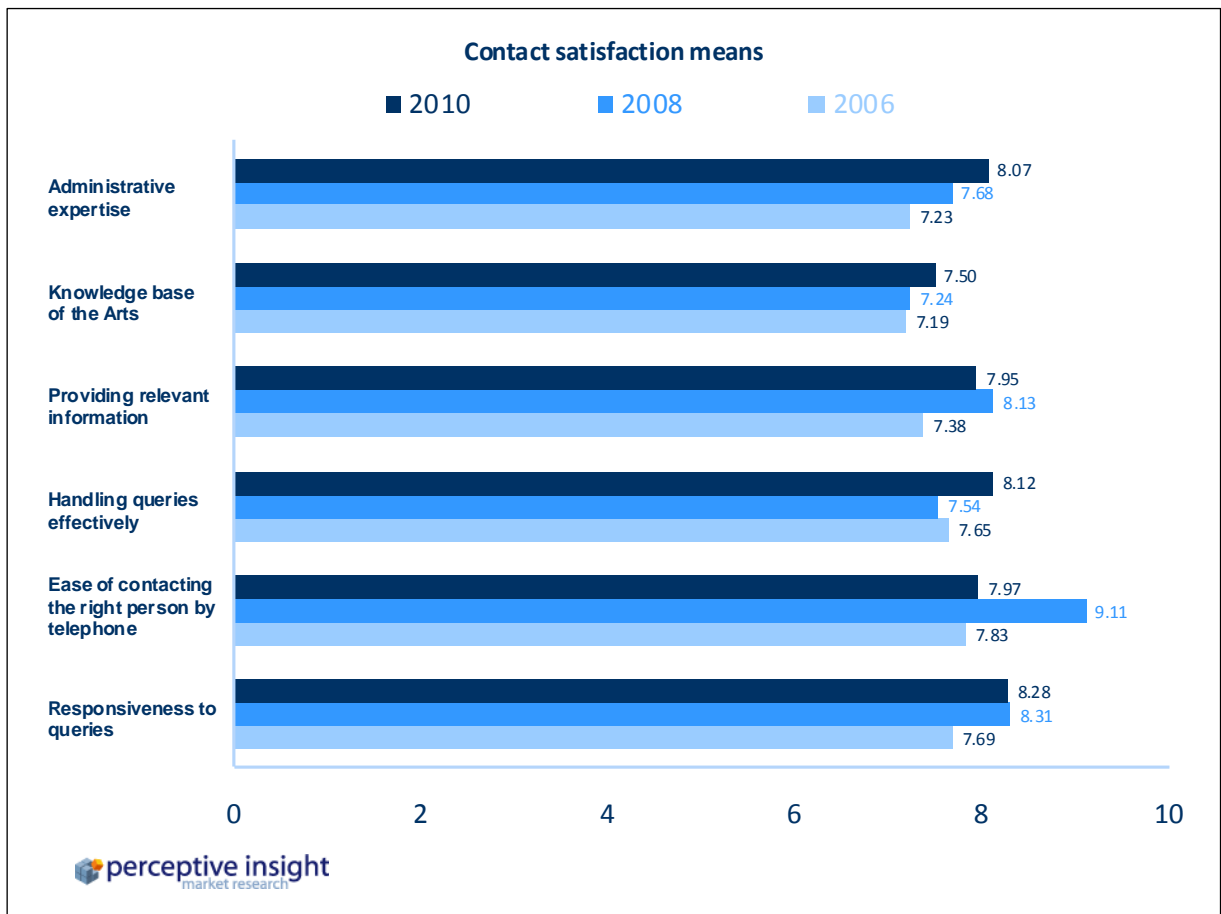
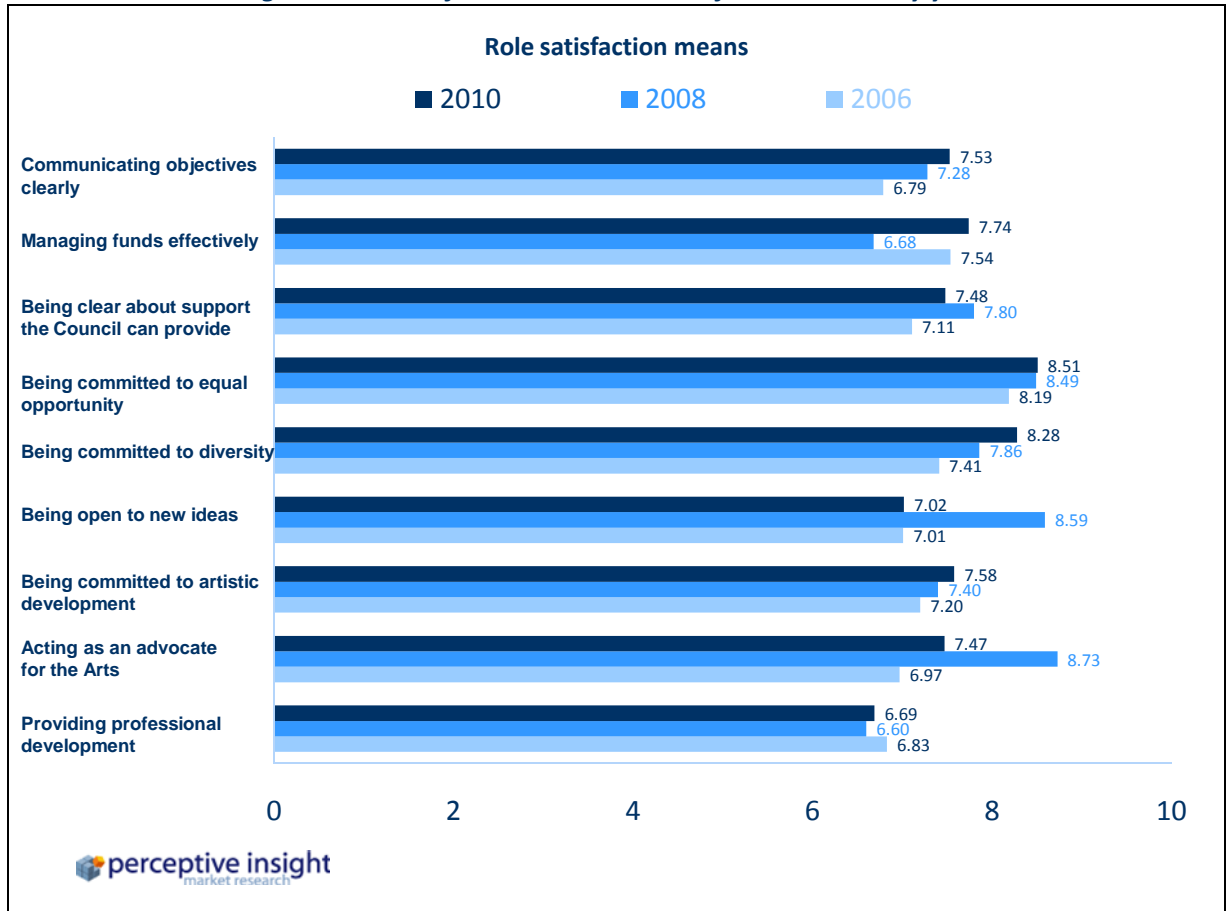


Figure A3: Contact with Council staff satisfaction means by year



**Figure A4: Role of the Arts Council satisfaction means by year**



# Appendix III – Calculating the Satisfaction Index™

Satisfaction Index™ is an overall measure of an organisation's success in satisfying its clients. Since some client's priorities will be more important to them than others, Satisfaction Index™ uses importance ratings to weight satisfaction ratings. The resulting index is therefore a weighted average score which is expressed as a percentage, a score of 100% representing total client satisfaction with every aspect of their dealings with an organisation.

As well as providing a measure of client's overall level of satisfaction, the Satisfaction Index™ can be used to make valid survey to survey comparisons even if the questions included in the survey change as time passes (which they most likely will as clients priorities change). Firstly the weighting factors are calculated using respondents' importance ratings. This involves getting the total sum of each respondent's importance scores and expressing each individual requirement as a percentage of the total.

The weighting factors are then used to convert each satisfaction scores into a weighted score. If ACNI achieved satisfaction scores of ten out of ten on every client requirement, the overall weighted average would be ten. It is normal to express Satisfaction Index™ as a percentage of that theoretical maximum score.

This process is repeated for every respondent and then an average of all the individual indices is calculated. This gives an overall index which shows how ACNI as a whole is performing.