

DRAFT
GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL
ARTS PLAN 2020-2024



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FOREWORD – Cathaoirleach

As Cathaoirleach of Galway County Council I am delighted to welcome the publication of the Galway County Council Arts Plan, 2020 – 2024.

County Galway has long been associated with the arts and culture, with our unique quality of life and natural landscape offering artists the type of environment for their creativity to thrive. Underpinning our commitment to support our creative community is a responsibility to ensure we preserve our landscape, our built and natural heritage to attract further development and ensure that the factors that are so conducive to creativity are preserved.

We see access to arts and culture as an essential component for communities to thrive and understand that creativity is the foundation of innovation, the most coveted skill across all areas of life in the 21st Century. We support the vision in this plan to “create a County that is a beacon for arts and culture: locally focused, nationally engaged and globally ambitious.” Throughout the lifetime of our investment in the arts we have been inspired by the passion and determination of our artists, voluntary groups and communities who continue to bring creativity to the heart of their lives and strive to make connections through the power of the imagination across all art forms and through the Irish language. This creativity and innovation have never been more evident than when our artists and arts organisations, professional and amateur, were presented with the challenges and restrictions presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

With the adoption of this Arts Plan new initiatives will be introduced in addition to supporting existing programmes, partnerships and infrastructure for the arts that have been successfully developed over a long number of years. Together these reflect our key priorities.

Galway is a County with a global reputation for its culture, its landscape, its language and its people. Our Galway County Arts Plan recognises the depth and richness of talent within its artistic community. Through it, we will work to support and develop this talent and nurture the artistic innovators of the future as well as the communities where they work and live.

Cathaoirleach, Cllr James Charity

FOREWORD – Chief Executive

The Galway County Council Arts Plan 2020-2024 is ambitious in its aspiration. Building on an intense and unique time in the cultural history of the region whilst also reflecting on the richness of our cultural experience and our passion to bring the arts into the heart of our landscape.

Our commitment to the on-going development of the arts and culture in County Galway is reflected in our support for the Arts Office's diverse programme of work. Galway County Council has formed very strong strategic alliances and partnerships with the Arts Council/An Comhairle Ealaíon, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Creative Ireland and other national agencies and government departments to ensure that we have very broad access to and engagement in arts activities across the County. Our local stakeholders are critical to the successful delivery of our Arts Programme and our strong links to communities enable us to support, nurture and develop artistic activity.

Galway 2020 European Capital of Culture offered communities, artists and the creative sector in the County much needed strategic investment and renewal. Galway County Council's commitment included significant financial investment, supporting our communities to avail of the many opportunities taking place in the rural landscape for 2020 and beyond. Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and the interruption (and in some cases, cancellation) to many projects and plans, the legacy of 2020 is reflected in the level of creativity it inspired and the quality of engagement throughout the County. Our European Capital of Culture designation has the potential to offer longer term benefits beyond its nominated year. It has been an opportunity for us to increase our cultural capacity and showcase our attractiveness as a centre of cultural excellence in Europe and beyond.

The Galway County Council Arts Plan, 2020 – 2024 notes the many changes in the artistic landscape with the impact of Covid-19 on our artists and communities. It acknowledges our longstanding commitment to the arts and our understanding of the empowering role that the arts can play in our communities. It also sets out a clear vision and allows us to strategically plan for the future. Our strategic priorities will support the growth and continuing development of the arts, not only encompassing County Galway's needs and ambitions but also placing them within the overall context of local, national and European strategies for the Arts.

Kevin Kelly, Chief Executive

OVERVIEW

A Profile of County Galway

County Galway has a geographic area of 6,149 km² and is the second largest County in Ireland. It has a population of 179,048 (2016 census) and covers an area from the Atlantic coastal regions in the west to the pastureland bordering the River Shannon in the east. The population has been steadily growing at a rate of 10% over the past decade. Galway is a diverse County, socially, geographically, economically and culturally and is home to the largest Gaeltacht in Ireland and the most populated offshore islands which adds to its uniqueness. It also has a significant area comprising EU 'Natura' designated sites reflecting the high quality natural and unique environments found throughout the County. The Irish language and our linguistic heritage are an intrinsic part of cultural life in Galway.



Employment in the County ranges from traditional areas such as farming and manufacturing to more recent and innovative sources in agri-food, biomedical technology, pharmaceuticals, information technology and the creative and cultural sectors.¹

Galway County Council's remit comprises of five Municipal Districts: Athenry/Oranmore (35,158), Ballinasloe (24,646), Connemara (38,532), Loughrea (39,346) and Tuam (41,708).² Galway County Council (Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe) is the elected and administrative body and is responsible for the development of the County as a vibrant place in which people can live, work, visit and invest. The Council has 39 elected members and elections are held every five years (most recent 2019).

¹ Galway County Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 - 2022

² Source CSO Census 2016 - Population Distribution and Movements

Galway County Council Arts Service

Galway County Council is the leading agency engaged in local arts development in County Galway. Through its Arts Office, it is committed to working collaboratively and in partnership with others to provide excellence and leadership in the development and delivery of the arts throughout the County.

The Galway County Arts Office has been in existence since 2001 and has had much impact and success, managing a wide range of programmes and supports in collaboration with key partners. Over the decades it has continued to support artists, professional arts organisations and artform development. It has created arts initiatives for young people, community groups and specific Arts in Context programmes (Arts in Health & Arts in Disability and Arts in Older Years).

Galway County Council has over 25 years' experience in commissioning public art and 15 public art projects ranging from permanent works to temporary projects, since 2001 the Arts Office has overseen this extensive programme. This includes the curated Public Visual Art Collection, which is on display in our public buildings across the County.

The last Galway County Arts Plan identified several new strategic priorities around public engagement which included a focus on youth arts, arts in health, in education and inclusion through arts and capacity building programmes. In the intervening years the Arts Office continued to focus on these objectives while also playing a pivotal role in securing Galway's designation as a UNESCO City of Film and the successful bid for Galway City and County to become European Capital of Culture 2020. Galway County Council were key stakeholders in the Galway Music Education Partnership which successfully attained a Music Generation Programme for the County in 2017. This initial 3-year investment fund of €600,000 ensures increased access to high-quality, subsidised vocal and instrumental tuition for children and young people in County Galway and has now entered its 2nd three-year programme.

In 2020, Tuam was chosen as home to the Arts Council's first three-year pilot programme, Creative Places Ireland. This pilot programme aims to build capacity locally for a sustainable grassroots approach to creativity and arts engagement and is supported in partnership with Galway County Council. It will create new opportunities for local communities to collaborate on meaningful arts experiences, both during the three-year programme and into the future.

Now, a decade on from the original plan and following a period of consultation and research, Galway County Arts Office is setting out its priorities and goals for the support and development of the arts 2020 to 2024 in this Arts Plan.

The Arts Office is led by an Arts Officer, who acts as both a strategist and programmer, supported by an administrative assistant. While the resources are limited, the ambition of the Arts Office is not. Our Arts Office currently offers an extensive range of supports, programmes and initiatives for individual artists, organisations, festivals and voluntary groups. A key element of the programme includes a strong focus on children and young people with an Artist in Schools Programme, Children's BookIt Festival and a Youth Arts Programme. We

continue to work with key partners to offer meaningful and informed arts experiences in older years and within the arts and disability sector.

The Arts Office continues to support, nurture and develop the existing artistic and creative activity throughout the County, supporting festivals and events such as Culture Night while ensuring all areas of the County have equal access to quality arts provision. A key element of the supports provided includes the training and mentoring programme Agents of Change. This was created by the Arts Office to further develop the potential of festivals and producers in the region including Shorelines Festival, Clifden Arts Festival, Traidphicnic, Headford Lace Project, Interface Inagh and Áras Éanna. This programme was developed in partnership with Irish Theatre Institute, Drama at NUIG and supported by the Arts Council and Galway City and Roscommon Arts Offices.

The introduction of Creative Ireland, the “all of government” project, presents local authorities with further wider creative opportunities under Pillar Two of its programme focusing on creativity in the community. The Galway County Creative Ireland Programme is guided by our uniquely defined strategic priorities and led by the Arts Office alongside the Culture Team. The annual programme supports and enhances the wide range of cultural programmes already in place through our arts office, libraries, conservation, heritage, economic development and Irish language provisions in the Council. It provides opportunities for artists and communities to reflect their own identities and work across a range of interests and genres that inspire and excite them.

The Arts Office’s delivery on this ambitious plan is framed within a collaborative relationship with departmental colleagues throughout Galway County Council, working together to create an achievable implementation plan and timeline. This organisation-wide collaboration will assist the Arts Office in the successful delivery of the Plan up to (and beyond) 2024, growing resources incrementally so it can strengthen existing provisions whilst introducing new strategic initiatives.

Policy and Context

The Galway County Council Arts Plan 2020-2024 plays an important role in supporting Galway County Council's social, economic and cultural policy objectives and is positioned within a wider national legislative and policy context.

Legislative Framework

Section 6 of the **Arts Act 2003** requires local authorities to prepare and implement plans for the development of the arts within their functional areas and shall, in so doing, take account of policies of the Government in relation to the arts.

*A local authority may provide such financial or other assistance as it considers appropriate to such persons or in respect of such activities or undertakings, for the purposes of a) stimulating public interest in the arts; b) promoting knowledge and appreciation of the arts or; c) improving the standards of the arts.*³

The arts as defined in the Arts Act 2003, incorporates:

“any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and including in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture and includes any medium when used for those purposes.”

National Policy Framework

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht provides the national policy and legislative framework and the financial resources to support the stimulation and development of the arts in Ireland. National policies inform the context in which Galway County Arts Office structures and delivers its supports and programmes.

This plan takes into account recent developments within the context of the arts nationally, in particular the following:

- ***Culture 2025: A National Cultural Policy Framework (2020)***
- ***Making Great Art Work (2015 – 2025) Arts Council/An Comhairle Ealaíon***
- ***Survive, Adapt, Renew:*** Arts Council response to the Covid-19 crisis for the Arts in Ireland.

Furthermore, this Arts Plan recognises opportunities for the arts within the Galway County Creative Ireland Programme as outlined in our ***Galway County Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018 – 2022***

Our long-standing partnership with the Arts Council is further strengthened through our ***Framework for Collaboration*** agreement with the Arts Council for the period 2019 – 2026.

³ The Arts Act 2003, Section 6 (1) and (2)

Local Policy Framework

In preparing this Arts Plan, the Arts Office is informed by and responsive to:

Galway County Council’s Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024, and our strategic goal “to improve, protect and promote our environment, culture, heritage and language in the interests of present and future generations”⁴.

Galway County Development Plan 2015 – 2021 affirms that Council’s policy objective to “actively encourage and support Arts Organisations to achieve their full potential, while enhancing the artistic life of County Galway. The Council supports and develops Organisations and Individuals working in the cultural and creative services” and “recognises the economic contribution that such niche assets and activities generate”⁵ throughout the County.

Galway County Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 – 2022, sets out to create “an inclusive County with a clear sense of identity where we work together towards achieving the full economic, social, community, linguistic and cultural potential of County Galway and all its people through citizen engagement at a local level”. Its aim is to ensure that the culture and language of our County remains a vibrant and unique part of our identity, is developed to the full and is reflected in this plan.

This Arts Plan will dovetail with these policies and will reflect the priorities therein whilst acknowledging the characteristics, challenges and potential that exist in County Galway itself.

⁴ Galway County Council Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024, p13

⁵ Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021; Chapter 10 pg. 180

Infrastructure for Arts

County Galway currently has inadequate formal, resourced arts spaces to support the vibrant arts and cultural activity taking place throughout the County. The County has one full-time, funded arts centre, Áras Éanna, located on Inis Oírr. Most voluntary arts groups around the County use temporary spaces to present programmes of arts activity, events and festivals. Access to these temporary or multi-use spaces is often irregular, uncertain, time-limited and problematic for voluntary groups. These spaces include town halls, courthouses, heritage, community and sports centres and privately owned spaces.

While formal, year-round, funded arts venues are limited, County Galway has an excellent network of libraries that support, encourage and present arts events and activities. This network includes 26 libraries with seven of those open full time. There is a strong relationship between the Arts Office and the Library Service who share many objectives including access for all to the arts and meaningful engagement with members of the community including our primary and secondary schools. Libraries are our freely available civic spaces that welcome use by local arts groups and offer facilities to host events organised by arts organisations both local and national. The Church Gallery at Ballinasloe Library was fully refurbished in 2016 and provides performance and exhibition space for all the community, hosting a yearlong programme of events, workshops and exhibitions.

Future Developments

The Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) offers potential in the life of this arts plan to strategically identify key locations for the provision of arts spaces in the County.

A number of key projects are currently under development through the RRDF funding and these specifically identify cultural and creative spaces as a priority. Loughrea Town Hall has received funding to transform the building into a cultural and enterprise hub featuring a theatre and multi-functional space for arts, culture and community endeavours. Further developments are being considered in several towns including: the potential development of a cultural quarter in Gort and the development of Portumna Courthouse into an arts and culture facility. The renovating and repurposing of Tuam Town Hall to include a creative/arts hub is currently being considered as part of the Tuam Town Centre regeneration masterplan.

This plan clearly sets the intention to develop resourced spaces for the arts as one of our strategic priorities in order to grow our cultural capacity.

OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Vision

Our vision is of a County that is a beacon for arts and culture: locally focused, nationally engaged and globally ambitious.

Mission

Galway County Arts Office will support, nurture and develop artistic and cultural opportunities for all in County Galway.

We do so by:

- Growing resources and programmes to make artistic careers more productive and sustainable.
- Ensuring community organisations are better supported and volunteers more fully recognised.
- Creating new pathways to connect with artists, communities, participants and audiences.

Values

Respect: for artists, communities, volunteers, participants and audiences across all ages and social backgrounds.

Commitment: to listening to people and supporting their creativity.

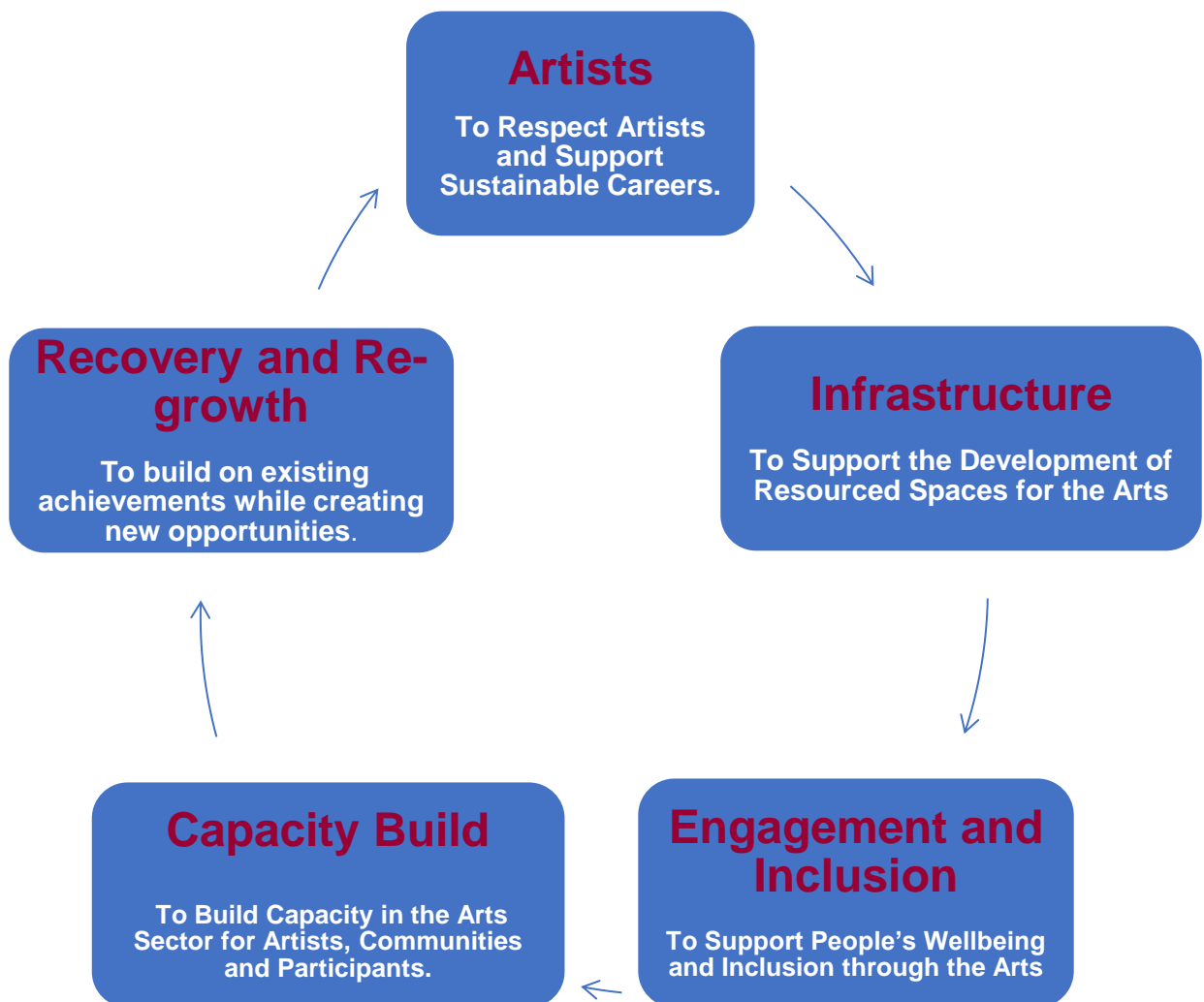
Partnership and Collaboration: to broker conversations and build relationship.

Connectivity: supporting and developing access to creative opportunities for everyone and connecting people and communities across the County.

Transparency and Accountability: Across all our programmes, funding schemes, initiatives and projects and ensure value for money.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

We have identified five interconnected and complementary priorities outlined below; each with a strategic goal and set of objectives directed towards achieving that goal. This will ensure that the implementation of this plan will be cohesive, achievable and lead to positive outcomes for all, up to and beyond 2024.



Priority I: Artists

Goal: To Respect Artists and Support Sustainable Careers.

Galway County Arts Office knows that artists - emerging, mid-career or established - are key to unlocking creativity in all our communities. We are committed to respecting their career ambitions and supporting them to make their best work.

For artists to function well they need to be resourced and funded to make work in an environment most conducive to their practice. We acknowledge that artists living and working in a small town or rural setting can experience the challenges of isolation, limited access to employment, resources, supports and a community of peers. We welcome artists new to the County and from diverse communities who bring differing cultural experiences.

Objectives

- Prioritise employment opportunities for local artists and ensure fair and equitable remuneration on all Arts Office projects, training initiatives or partnership activities.
- Support artists and organisations around the County to develop and produce high-quality work.
- Explore ways in which access to artist residencies and bursaries can be expanded in Galway County and elsewhere.
- Create an on-line resource giving artists access to information on funding opportunities, residencies, training, mentoring and capacity building programmes (nationally and internationally).
- Introduce a commissioning award (in addition to the Public Art Commissions⁶) open to individual artists and/or organisations wishing to commission artists.
- Encourage submissions from artists with diverse backgrounds and cultural experiences to deliver projects in their own communities.
- Provide training and capacity building for making work on digital platforms, both technical and artistic, to facilitate artists in continuing their creativity and reaching audiences in the post-pandemic environment.
- Create networks for artists, working in both English and Irish, to build connectivity throughout the sector in the County and beyond, encourage collaboration, project development and peer-to-peer learning.
- Convene a biennial Galway Artists' Assembly, which will be delivered on-line in 2021 leading to a live gathering in 2023.
- Listen to artists and work with them on the design, implementation and evaluation of funding programmes to acknowledge that, increasingly, artists work across art forms and in specific contexts.⁷

⁶ Galway County Council's Public Art Policy 2020-2024 will be published in late 2020.

⁷ For example, artists with disabilities may have additional costs such as transport or insurance and artists working through Irish require application forms slightly different to those applying in English.

- Collaborate with Galway City Council Arts Office to maximise funding for artists making and presenting work in both County and city.

We recognise the resilience of artists and the challenging circumstances under which they work. Covid-19 has had a catastrophic impact on artists' practice, creativity, earning capacity and wellbeing. Financial uncertainty and loss of opportunity are key issues facing the artistic community and this Arts Plan endeavours to help address that in its lifetime.

The Arts Office supports all arts and cultural endeavours, particularly championing work in community and voluntary settings, but our remit means that many supports are aimed at professional artists and those pursuing a career in the arts. We will be open and transparent in our criteria, terms and conditions and assessment processes, while clear that we may not be able to respond to every need due to limited resources. Over the life of this plan, we will work to grow resources incrementally to meet the needs of the entire spectrum of artists and makers.

Priority II: Infrastructure

Goal: To Support the Development of Resourced Spaces for the Arts

Dedicated, well-resourced spaces support the creative ambitions of artists and the public and enable more people to access arts and culture in their communities.

Our consultation process highlighted the insufficiency of suitable, available and resourced arts spaces for artists making work for local volunteer organisations, festivals and communities wishing to create and present art and cultural events.

Through the Arts Council and CCMA Framework for Collaboration it was agreed that the Arts Council and local authorities would work together more strategically in developing the arts in Ireland and a priority for the partnership is to develop a coordinated, spatially-informed strategy to support and develop the infrastructure for the arts. The objectives outlined in this arts plan reinforce our commitment to identify key areas for the provision of arts spaces in the County.

Objectives

- Maximise opportunities across all future Council developments to ensure arts and cultural spaces are considered. This includes space for performances, rehearsals, studios and outdoor spaces for public gatherings.
- Conduct an audit of buildings currently owned by Galway County Council which may be vacant or have potential use as a cultural space.
- In collaboration with colleagues in the Economic and Community Development Department, source funding through RRDF to identify potential opportunities for the development of medium and long-term arts infrastructure to support arts activity in the County.
- Support the application for funding to allow for the development and establishment of identified art spaces/venues based on feasibility studies.
- Conduct an audit of buildings in the County currently used as a cultural space by artists/community/voluntary arts groups to include temporary, seasonal and multi-use spaces.
- Support Community and Voluntary groups in their ambitions to source and or enhance existing spaces for use as cultural hubs and maximise the spaces for arts provision.
- Build a database/listing of technology and equipment potentially available for use by artists and arts groups in the ownership of the Library Service through creative technologies capital funds.
- Assess potential spaces for artists' residencies in County Galway to add to those currently available at Áras Éanna (Inis Oírr).

- Make all necessary information on health, safety and welfare guidelines available on-line and through practical workshops.
- Adopt a 'Green Arts' policy in relation to any investment and development in and management of arts spaces and venues - provide the appropriate training required, in partnership with Galway County Council's Environment Department and national agencies.

Priority III: Engagement and Inclusion

Goal: To Support People's Wellbeing and Inclusion through the Arts

Access to the arts has been proven to have a positive effect on physical and mental health. Galway County Arts Office undertakes to enhance individual and collective wellbeing through engagement with quality arts experiences.

The County's social, economic, environmental and cultural future is predicated on collaboration and the strategic deployment and investment of resources to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of people living and working in the County.

A key factor for the successful delivery of this element of the plan will be the ongoing development of strategic partnerships to create opportunities for people as they age, as they enter and grow up through the school system, irrespective of the community in which they live or the background from which they come.

It is accepted that, within the arts in Ireland, many inequities still exist and that there are people who continue to experience barriers to engaging with and participating in the arts because of their socio-economic background, gender, sexual orientation, civil or family status, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community.⁸

Objectives

- Operate a policy of equality, access and inclusion in all arts programmes and initiatives. We will achieve this through working with partner agencies on community led, quality arts engagement for our established and new communities.
- Engage specialist arts expertise to work with groups who have yet to access arts programmes to encourage meaningful collaboration between communities and artists.
- Work with local communities to support and encourage volunteerism as an access point to the arts.
- Collaborate and develop arts programmes for children and young people with artists, organisations and national agencies whose have professional arts expertise is in this area while continuing to support arts programmes in schools with the Library Service, Creative Schools, GRET, teachers and principals.
- Develop an artist led, County wide project to engage teenagers from diverse backgrounds in arts projects as participants and in order to foster our artists of the future.

⁸ Arts Council Equality, Human Rights & Diversity Policy & Strategy (2019)

- Support youth music, orchestras and music in schools in collaboration with Music Generation Galway County and national and local music providers endeavouring to reach new areas in the County for music engagement.
- Work with organisations and individuals whose professional arts expertise is in Arts in Disability to ensure a more extensive and inclusive programme in County Galway for artists and people with intellectual and physical disabilities.
- We will provide opportunities for people across all ages while encouraging an inter-generational and integrated approach to arts activity.⁹
- Work with new and existing partners to explore bespoke arts in context initiatives such as Arts on Prescription, an internationally recognised innovative programme that prescribes the arts as an alternative to prescription medications for older members of the community.
- Capture the creativity and contribution of older people in County Galway through artists' commissions across a wide range of art forms and engage with local and national organisations such as Age & Opportunity, Age Action and Galway Older People's Council.
- Review our current Arts in Context Programmes to evaluate their social impact and to inform priorities for investment and programming in these contexts.
- Ensure best practice in relation to arts engagement with any vulnerable communities or participants in line with Covid-19 health, safety and welfare guidelines and social distancing requirements.

The delivery of these objectives is a shared undertaking. Our level of progress will be dependent on a collective effort across many departments, sections and organisations with expertise and knowledge complementary to that of the Arts Office. We will work in collaboration with our colleagues in the community and social inclusion department to identify and galvanise the resources required to maximise our impact in this important area of work.

⁹ One million of the Irish population will over 65 years by 2031 (increase of 86% since 2016); Currently, 12.4% of Galway's population is over 65 years; 22.8% is under 15 years.

Priority IV: Capacity Building

Goal: To Build Capacity in the Arts Sector for Artists, Communities and Participants.

Galway County Arts Office is committed to supporting arts and cultural activity in the west, encouraging the retention of local talent and empowering a skilled and connected arts sector to achieve its potential.

Our consultation process revealed the need to accelerate this commitment. This was evident as the urgent demand for mentoring, training, access to information and participation in new networks was expressed. A successful capacity building programme will increase arts activity, enhance professionalism and the sustainability of festivals and events, provide employment opportunities and encourage County wide collaboration and skills exchange. It will support the work of established arts organisations who are seeking to build new relationships and audiences in parts of the County not served due to the lack of organisational and promotional skills on the ground.

Objectives

- Develop capacity through mentoring, training, information provision for artists, cultural producers, curators and event managers, be they professional or voluntary in their area of practice with the intention of retaining and developing essential talent in the County.
- Build networks within the County for professional artists, local festivals and voluntary arts groups to create a collaborative and supportive culture of resource sharing, information and skills exchange.
- Offer continuing professional development opportunities for artists and cultural producers/curators in partnership with national artform resource organisations.
- Build partnerships with national and international colleagues to offer opportunities for artists and arts workers to expand their horizons and develop connections beyond Galway.
- In partnership with CREATE continue to support the Arts Council's Creative Places Tuam pilot programme in Tuam until 2022. This pilot continues to invest directly in cultural activity in Tuam and seeks to uncover Tuam's key assets, resources and ambitions.
- Deliver further training and development programmes (Agents of Change) for festivals and events producers with attention to production, event management, licensing, sustainability, succession, good governance, health and safety and forward planning.
- Work in partnership with the Tourism Officer to provide training in marketing, promotion and social media to help voluntary groups, local festivals and events to maximise their visibility, audience reach and profile building.

The capacity building and network development will be delivered through the Arts Office in partnership with other agencies including LEADER, Local Enterprise Office, national arts resource organisations and the Galway County Public Participation Network (PPN) which has an important role to play within the voluntary sector.

Priority V: Recovery and Re-growth

Goal: To build on existing achievements while creating new opportunities.

We will draw on the many previous achievements, experiences and learnings of Galway County Arts Office to inform new initiatives that support and strengthen the County's arts sector.

This Plan recognises the need for measures to ensure recovery and growth following the impact of Covid-19 on all sectors of Galway's social, economic and cultural life. New initiatives, encouraging connectivity and collaboration to create a range of opportunities for artists, communities and audiences are required.

Objectives

- Maximise opportunities and build on partnerships established by arts organisations who delivered projects in the County as part of the Galway 2020 programme, with a view to nurturing relationships and opportunities for artists and organisations where they occur.
- Build on the European cultural relationships developed by the Arts Office as a partner on "Culture Up 2020-2022", an Erasmus+ professional capacity building programme.
- Draw from the learning and value of community engagement shown during the Galway 2020 County programme *Small Towns, Big Ideas* to develop a sustainable programme of arts activity throughout the County in coming years.
- Explore the potential for an inaugural County-wide festival in 2024 celebrating the Irish language and artistic richness of the West, taking the National Eisteddfod as a model of practice for the study.¹⁰
- Facilitate opportunities for artists interested in developing work on digital platforms in partnership with the audio-visual sector in the West.
- Harness the expertise of the talented audio-visual sector in the County to develop opportunities for artists, festivals and arts communities to access digital platforms and technology to drive local content and programmes.
- Design initiatives that encourage artist mobility and reciprocal exchange internationally, with a particular focus on Europe (when travel restrictions are lifted and safety is assured).

¹⁰ The National Eisteddfod is a celebration of the culture and language of Wales and is described as Wales' leading mobile regeneration project showcasing music, dance, visual arts, literature and performance in a Welsh language contemporary context.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Galway is the second biggest County in Ireland and its budget for the arts has much demand placed on it. This plan aims to introduce programmes, initiatives and projects that will enhance and grow arts activity and engagement over the next five years. The ambition is to grow the available resources in terms of funding, resources, hard and soft infrastructure, capacity and expertise. This will require a programme of monitoring and evaluation whereby the effect of Galway County Council's investment in the arts can be measured to assess impact and progress.

In tandem, we are working directly with the Arts Council through a Framework Agreement to agree a model of evaluation that takes into account the social return on investment and the impact on health, wellbeing and overall quality of life.

Implementation

The Arts Plan will be supported by a timeline, action and implementation plan which will be monitored regularly. This plan will be continuously reviewed and will respond where necessary to changing circumstances. Its objectives are dependent on funding and available resources. The key priorities outlined in this plan will determine the annual work plan of the Arts Office.

This will be also be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis as part of **Galway County Council's Corporate Plan (2020 – 2024)** and annual Service Plan which assesses performance, delivery and impact.

Additionally, we commit to undertaking a midpoint review of this plan. We will review outputs, outcomes and achievements to date, consider what is still feasible in any changed context and iterate our implementation plan for 2023 and beyond.

Appendix

Research Methodology

Research on the Galway County Arts Plan 2020 – 2024 began in earnest in January 2019. From the outset, the aim was to listen, analyse and distil the findings from the rigorous process that sought to hear the experiences, challenges, ambitions and needs of artists, organisations, communities, voluntary groups, participants and audiences across age ranges and social backgrounds. The process concluded in September 2019.

Desk Research

Numerous Arts Plans published by Local Authorities around Ireland were examined to acquire a national perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing other local authority Arts Offices working within the same policy frameworks as Galway County. Relevant national arts policies were reviewed as was Galway County's Local Economic and Community Plan, County Development Plan and Galway County Corporate Plan, Websites for arts organisations, community groups, local festivals, resource organisations and information providers were widely studied.

Action Research

Agents of Change is an on-going action research project led by Galway County Arts Office, funded by the Arts Council under the Invitation to Collaboration programme. It is delivered in collaboration with Galway City Council Arts Office, Roscommon County Arts Office, O'Donoghue Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance at NUIG and Irish Theatre Institute. It is a mentoring and capacity building pilot programme (2019/20) for practicing arts producers, curators and festival/event organisers based in Galway and Roscommon. It is aimed at building professional arts expertise, developing an arts network, providing access to relevant information, growing producing support for artists and, ultimately, creating employment and project management opportunities for people wishing to build professional arts management careers in the West of Ireland. An evaluation and findings report from this project will be published in Spring 2021.

Consultations

Public Meetings

Publicly advertised, evening town hall meetings for people interested in arts practice and provision in the County were held in Maam Cross, Oranmore and Ballinasloe led by a professional facilitator. These were attended by professional artists and arts workers, students, amateur practitioners, volunteers and members of the public. The Gaeltacht area was represented in the Maam Cross meeting.

Focus Groups

Two focus groups, comprising of professional artists and organisations working throughout the County across all art forms, were convened in Galway city. Lasting two hours, the discussions followed a structured agenda and were recorded for accuracy. A significant number of participants were artists who do, or can, work through Irish and the place of the language was uppermost in the discussion.

Youth Groups

Members of Comhairle na nÓg took part in a County consultation during one of its key events and a wide number of schools were consulted with the assistance of the Creative Schools Coordinators in the County.

Key Informant Interviews

Face to face interviews were conducted with members of the Galway County Council Executive, the Library Service, Galway 2020, arts organisations, policy makers, community representatives drawing on their first-hand experience of the Arts Office and their knowledge of County Galway's overall operational practices.

Surveys

Three bespoke methods of participating in the Arts Plan consultation were made widely available through national consultation portals, social media, by direct email, via the Galway County Council website and the Galway Public Participation Network (PPN). They were:

- An on-line survey for professional artists/practitioners, arts organisations/festivals.
- An on-line survey for amateur/voluntary organisations and community groups.
- An open submission 'Have Your Say' comment form.

In addition, elected members of Galway County Council were invited to participate in the survey process.

Acknowledgments

The Arts Office would like to thank everyone who contributed to the management, facilitation and consultation process that have led to the publication of the Arts Plan for Galway County Council.

In particular the Arts Office wishes to thank:

Jane Daly

Our thanks to those who contributed to this plan:

Kevin Kelly, Alan Farrell, Catherine Gallagher, Martina Maloney, Ann Mallaghan, Patricia Philbin and Arthur Lappin. Mairead Folan, Paula Kehoe, Matthew Berrill, Rionach Ní Neill, Bernadette Divilly, Pam Fleming, Little John Nee, Philip Doherty, Kristin Fontanella, Frank Monaghan, Darach Mac Ion Iomaire, Maeve Mulrennan, Ester Kiely, Noelle Lynskey, Selma Makela, Margaret Flannery (Saolta Arts), Maeve Bryan (Galway Music Residency), Petal Pilley (Blue Teapot Theatre Company) and Ruth Gordon (Music Generation), members of Galway County Comhairle na nÓg, Claude Medoc, Catherine Maher Costello, Lali Morris, Ted Turton, Mike Casey, David Joyce, Armand Golden, Sheila Flanagan, Nuala O'Connor, Ness Kelly, James Walsh, Jess Walsh, Leah Beggs, Sean Mulkerrin, Kathleen Furey.

Members of the Community and Culture SPC

Cllr. Ivan Canning (Cathaoirleach)

Cllr. Liam Carroll

Cllr. Shelly Herterich Quinn

Cllr. Padraic Mac an Iomaire

Cllr. Peter Keaveney

Cllr. Andrew Reddington

Helena McElmeel

Megan Flynn

Mairtin Davy

Senior Management:

Kevin Kelly, Chief Executive

Alan Farrell, Director of Services

Kieran Coyne, SEO

Jo Vahey, Executive Librarian

Marie Mannion, Heritage Officer

We would also like to thank:

Galway County Council Members

Community, Enterprise and Regeneration Team

Galway County Council Culture Team.

Everyone who contributed via Survey and attended the public meetings.