

ARTS COUNCIL OF NORTHERN IRELAND ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2021/22



***Our mission is to place the Arts at the heart of our
social, economic and creative life***

Business Plan 2021/22

1. Introduction.....	3
2. The Strategic Framework.....	6
3. Our Organisation: Who We Are, What We Do.....	6
Board of the Arts Council.....	6
4. Policy Priorities.....	7
5. Looking Ahead to 2021/22	8
6. Artists	9
7. Annually Funded Organisations.....	9
8. Equality Scheme	10
9. Disability Action Plan.....	10
10. Celebration of Age	11
11. North-South Working	11
12. East West Relations	11
13. Local Government	11
14. Cultural Heritage.....	12
15. Improving Operations & Service	12
16. Digital Developments.....	13
17. Annual Funding Survey	13
18. Internal key points of action during 2021/22	13
19. Corporate Governance.....	14
20. Resources and Budget 2021/22	14
Appendix 1	15
Appendix 2	19
Appendix 3	20
Appendix 4	22

1. Introduction

The Business Plan for 2021/22 reflects the context of a society that has been severely impacted by the COVID pandemic; consequently we continue to revise the routine of our daily lives and explore different ways to work. The fragile and vital arts sector in NI has been exponentially affected. The Arts Council engaged directly with the sector in 2020/21 to hear about the challenges artists and organisations were facing. We ran a survey in April 2020 which told us that:

- Based on a response from 152 artists (77 per cent of artists questioned) the average loss of earnings over the three-month period between March and May was estimated to be £3,756.
- Based on data from 108 organisations (89 per cent of all organisation respondents), anticipated income loss over the three-month period was expected to total £3.97m, an average of £36,714 per organisation. This varied significantly depending on the scale of the organisation.

ACNI ran an additional survey in July 2020 to assess the situation faced by arts organisations. Based on a response from 129 organisations at that time, the survey indicated that:

- Organisations estimated a loss of 180,000 arts activities and 3,000,000 audience members from engaging in the arts since lockdown began until September 2020. The loss of these events have prevented 36,000 work opportunities for NI artists and freelance creatives.
- Organisations reported average losses of £91,000 in ticket sales and many public and philanthropic funders have either withdrawn or been unable to provide funding. 74% predicted deficits by the end of the year; which they estimated will be between £6.6-10m for 2020/21

Evidence generated from this survey work was used to inform business cases made to the Department for dedicated support under the Barnett Consequential. Further research and evaluation work will be conducted in FY2021/22 to complete the picture of the damage experienced by the Arts Sector as a result of the pandemic and assess how well organisations are adapting to the new operating environment.

In response we offered rollover funding to 97 arts organisations in order to bring about a measure of stability and reassurance to the sector via the annual funding programme. We were pleased to be able to offer standstill funding under our Annual Funding Programme and make immediate payments of 50% to assist with cash flow at this time of huge loss of income from box office and other earned income and grants.

We continued to ensure our routine programmes were delivered, despite the unprecedented situation.

Table 1 Routine Programmes FY20-21¹

Programme	Fund	No.	Value of Awards	Decision Date
Small Grants Programme	Lottery	33	£194,447	Various - monthly moderations
Annual Funding Programme	Lottery & Exchequer	97	£12,920,993	April 2020
Lottery Project Funding	Lottery	42	£1,078,463	June 2020
SIAP - General Art Awards Only	Lottery	239	£468,208	October 2020
SIAP – Young Musicians’ Platform Award	Lottery	6	£28,000	December 2020
Arts and Older People	Lottery	12	£109,024	December 2020
Creative Schools	Lottery	9	£38,207	November 2020
Musical Instruments for Bands	Exchequer	23	£173,186	January 2021
Musical Instruments for Groups	Exchequer	33	£235,743	January 2021
Musical Instruments for Individuals	Exchequer	39	£172,509	January 2021
Grand Total		533	£15,418,780	

Table 2: Other awards made during FY20-21²

Programme	Fund	No of Awards	Value of Awards	Decision Date
Arts Development Fund	Exchequer	14	£111,725	Various
DFC Additional Resources ³	Exchequer	7	£854,244	Various
DfC Capital Fund	Exchequer	1	£524,399	November 2020
SIAP - (University of Atypical)	Lottery	2	£50,000	Various
Grand Total		24	£1,540,368	

¹ Please note this table is based on data extracted on 10/05/21

² Please note this table summarizes all awards and excludes awards that are not accepted by the applicant

³ This includes 4 awards which were made to the following organisations in respect of reopening costs due to COVID19 (Crescent Arts Centre, The Lyric Theatre NI, The MAC and Ulster Orchestra Society Ltd which totaled £619,764)

Our response to the emerging and continuing needs of the sector was evidenced and used to develop a series of emergency grant programmes.

Table 3 Emergency Programmes FY20-21⁴

Programme	Number	Total	Decision Date 2020/21
Artists Emergency Programme	224	£547,320	May 2020
Health & Safety Capital Programme	53	£776,950	November 2020
Individuals Emergency Resilience Programme 1	1,082	£3,834,200	October 2020
Organisation Emergency Programme 1	150	£1,949,113	August 2020
Organisation Emergency Programme 2	62	£900,859	October 2020
Small Capital Programme	69	£658,877	November 2020
Sustainability and Renewable Programme ⁵	167	£10,457,126	February 2021
Individuals Emergency Resilience Programme 2	1,563	£6,917,794	February 2021
Grand Total	3,370	£26,042,239	

In the current financial year 2021/22 a similar approach to rollover funding will be adopted due to the continuing impact of COVID. The principal objective of this approach is to maintain a core arts infrastructure for the future.

We will continue to work with the Department to make the case to the Executive as the impact continues to take its toll on the venues, theatres, arts organisations and creative practitioners who make up our vibrant arts sector.

We remain committed to place the work of our artists and arts organisations at the heart of our social, economic and creative life, advocating their worth in a way that connects with audiences, policymakers, investors and wider society, contributing to the growth of our wider economy and building cohesion within and between communities.

⁴ Please note this data was extracted on 10/05/21

⁵ This includes a number of award reductions due to LRSS

2. The Strategic Framework

During the course of 2020/21 the five-year framework for the Arts in NI 2019-2024, entitled "*Inspire, Connect, Lead*" was approved by the Minister for Communities. This business plan reflects the third year of the five-year framework, specifically developed as a framework in light of prevailing uncertainties: the 2016-2021 draft Programme for Government (PfG); the pressure to protect 'frontline services' and manage within reduced public funding; the need to encourage resilience within the sector and promote, where appropriate, the use of shared services, all against the backdrop of the impact of Covid-19. We will be flexible and respond to emerging priorities. The NI Executive is developing a new strategic, outcomes-based Programme for Government (PfG), the draft outcomes of which were consulted upon from January to March 2021. The Arts Council response demonstrates the role of arts and culture in supporting the Executive to meet its strategic objectives.

Arts organisations in NI continue to rely on public funding and in this second exceptional year many are facing existential threat. Nonetheless we will continue to support portfolio funded organisations to build awareness of funding opportunities available through charitable trusts and foundations and invest in capacity building measures to help the sector become more resilient as they plan for the future post COVID-19.

Together we will work with Arts & Business NI to implement the Blueprint programme and support Derry City and Strabane District Council to implement a new resilience programme for arts organisations in their area. We will work with other public funders in the Arts to ensure that our grants are working effectively and that our funding policy and practice is supporting long term resilience.

3. Our Organisation: Who We Are, What We Do

Board of the Arts Council

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) of the Department for Communities. The Board provides a broad cross-section of expertise, including representatives from the arts and culture sector. Board Members have individual and collective responsibility to the Minister for Communities in relation to the governance of the Arts Council.

The Arts Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 established the functions of the Arts Council as follows:

- a) to develop and improve the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the Arts;

- b) to increase public access to and participation in the Arts;
- c) to advise the Department and other government departments, district councils and other bodies on matters relating to the Arts; and
- d) such other functions as are conferred on the Council by any other statutory provision.

In discharging these functions, the Arts Council has developed an Equality Scheme 2019-2024 of which progress was reported to the Equality Commission for 2019/20. We will continue to report annually on the Equality Action Plan in 2021/22. Schedule 9 of the Act requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and the desirability of promoting good relations.

In addition, under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995), the Arts Council is specifically required to have due regard to the need to: promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the Arts Council is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a disability action plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions.

The Disability Action Plan 2019-2024 has been developed and the progress against the actions within the report are reported to the Equality Commission and annual progress will be reported in 21/22.

4. Policy Priorities

New Decade, New Approach

The Arts Council welcomed the restoration of the political institutions in NI and the appointment of Minister Hargey to the Department for Communities. We acknowledge the contribution of Carál Ní Chuilín, who acted as temporary Minister for Communities from June until December 2020.

We are confident that the arts can contribute across many of the priorities set out and agreed by the Executive in the New Decade, New Approach framework and the new 2021 draft outcomes framework. We note the requirements for the new Programme for Government building on the previous one to include tackling disadvantage and driving economic growth, as well as tackling paramilitarism and sectarianism.

COVID-19 and its impact will continue to feature in our lives for some considerable period of time; the arts are an essential part of our society and contribute to quality of life, the economy and health and wellbeing as we find ways to express the impact of the pandemic and the loss of life as a result.

Climate change is clearly a global issue and the arts can provide powerful voices and critical thinking on this challenge as well as showing leadership through example.

The arts provide a safe space for people to explore cultural difference: we welcomed the emphasis on cultural and linguistic heritage, and the support structures through the establishment of commissioners for Irish Language and Ulster Scots/Ulster British traditions. We look forward to working with the Office of Identity to share good practice and models from the arts arena.

In addition, we will cooperate fully in the review of Arm's Length Bodies. We will work with the survivors of historical institutional abuse to commission a lasting memorial at Stormont and ensure the arts are recognised and understood as creative career choices under the measures to enhance employability and growth and provide training and apprentices.

5. Looking Ahead to 2021/22

Everyone has the right to access arts and culture of their own choosing and we remain committed to realising that ambition. By contributing to the Government's priorities, the Arts Council will deliver the following benefits during 2021/22 the full list of priorities for 2021/22 is detailed in Appendix 2 below.

- In light of the current circumstances, review the existing programmes of support if no additional emergency funding becomes available to understand their suitability and ensure they offer the best support possible for the arts and cultural sector.
- Deploy dedicated surveys to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 and to understand the current financial stability of the sector as we prepare for the future to develop appropriate policy responses and advocate for support from government;
- Assess the future infrastructural needs of the sector particularly those venues that were constructed as part of the capital grant programme but which may require refurbishment and updating and may continue to have specific health and safety requirements for reopening post quarantine as a result of COVID-19;
- Continue the partnership with DfC and Universities in NI with a view to commissioning a scoping study to further understand the creative industries and skills development needs.
- Signpost funded organisations to relevant skills and leadership development opportunities.

- As a result of work undertaken of art form classifications in 2020/21, we will engage with individual artists to ensure that the Arts Council aligns to current models of practice that artists engage in.
- We will review two artform areas in 2021/22 drawing on recent research to inform future policy decisions - drama/theatre and music.
- We will review Local Councils Community Plans and use these as a basis to develop an MOU/SLA with two Local Authorities beyond Belfast.

6. Artists

Our artists are one of the greatest sources of talent that we have in our society - supporting their creative development is an essential role of the Arts Council. We will continue to value, celebrate and support artists through our routine system of awards and commissions and by developing further opportunities to highlight their work at home and abroad where possible.

We will review our international work in conjunction with our partners in the British Council, Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris, NI Bureau's in Washington, India for the delivery of the Jaipur Literature Festival 2022 and China and our colleagues in other Arts Councils to maximise these vital opportunities for artists as the crisis abates.

7. Annually Funded Organisations

The Arts Council's Annual Funding Programme (AFP) is the most significant allocation of public funding for the arts in Northern Ireland each year. The aim of the Annual Funding Programme (AFP) is to support Northern Ireland's arts infrastructure through grants to organisations in all artforms and practices for their core and programming costs. AFP organisations will be key to helping us achieve the objectives set out in our 5-year strategic framework for developing the arts, *Inspire / Connect / Lead*⁶, and we expect all awardees to support us in delivering these objectives.

In 2019-20, The Arts Council supported 97 organisations by awarding £12.8m through Exchequer and National Lottery funds. In the context of funding constraints, and loss of income as a result of COVID-19 we will mitigate the impact of spending reductions and protect "frontline services". We will foster the principles of adaptive resilience, encourage arts organisations to collaborate with each other, and assess commercial opportunities through new digital platforms. In collaboration with Arts & Business NI we will work to raise awareness of the work of Trusts and Foundations, and alternative forms of arts finance.

⁶ *Inspire / Connect / Lead*, <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/ACNI-Draft-5-year-Strategic-Framework-for-Developing-the-Arts-2019-2024.pdf>

Organisations in receipt of funding from the Annual Funding Programme (AFP) from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, are required to complete an annual survey on the activity they deliver, their workforce composition and income and expenditure for the relevant year.⁷

8. Equality Scheme

The Arts Council has a longstanding commitment to promote equality and has developed particular programmes which respond to the needs of marginalised groups.

The Arts Council will implement The Equality Scheme, which is a statement of its commitment to fulfilling its Section 75 duties. The Equality Monitoring Working Group was set up in 2013 as part of the Art Council's arrangements for assessing compliance with Section 75 duties.

Its function is to provide strategic leadership for the outworking of the Equality Scheme by ensuring that equality and diversity is embedded across the organisation. Chaired by the Chief Executive the group meets quarterly to review progress.

9. Disability Action Plan

The Arts Council will implement The Disability Action Plan which outlines the organisation's commitment to promoting positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encourages participation in all aspects of the Arts.

Setting out a range of action points, the Disability Action Plan aims to ensure that people with a disability have the same opportunities to avail of investment in the Arts, including the employment of persons with a disability in the arts sector. The plan builds on measures already taken by the Arts Council to promote inclusion and access, including funding the core costs for several Arts and Disability organisations, supporting artists through the Individual Disabled/Deaf Artists grants programme and ensuring equality of access to the Arts through the Arts & Disability Equality Charter.

The Disability Action Plan represents a clear statement of the Arts Council's ongoing commitment to fulfilling the statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006). The Arts Council will implement the recommendations arising from an analysis of its Premium Payment as part of our Equality commitment. In recognition of the specific disadvantages faced by deaf and disabled artists particularly from COVID-19 we will ensure that should we receive additional emergency funding for 2021-22, a proportion will be allocated to meet their needs and administered through the University of Atypical.

⁷ [Microsoft Word - 1920 AFS Headline Report V2 \(artscouncil-ni.org\)](https://www.artscouncil-ni.org/microsoft-word-1920-afs-headline-report-v2)

10. Celebration of Age

The Arts and Older People Programme is aimed at stimulating arts engagement amongst vulnerable and isolated older people and continues to make a difference to many people's lives. Jointly funded by the Public Health Agency and the Baring Foundation, we will promote the achievements of twelve projects being delivered under COVID restrictions and also launch the case studies publication capturing the voices of three older people in care home settings during lockdown.

11. North-South Working

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland and An Chomhairle Ealaíon have been working together to develop the Arts for the past thirty-seven years. This cooperation takes many forms and includes an annual plenary session that receives reports from the joint North South Working Group.

The work plan for 2021/22 comprises support for a comprehensive range of arts organisations delivering services on an all island basis. A Chair of Poetry and an all island Children's Laureate have been established through this mechanism.

12. East West Relations

The Arts Council also has long-standing relationships with the other Arts Councils in the UK. The 2021/22 work plan includes joint working to promote the Lottery Good Causes strategy with the National Lottery Promotions Unit, evaluating the impact of Covid-19 across the different nations and sharing responses to the situation as well as continuing with agreed actions where feasible such as commissioning opportunities with the Performing Rights Society for composers from NI. We will share intelligence about the impact of Brexit on our arts and cultural sector.

13. Local Government

The Arts Council has been working with stakeholders to ground the relationship with the local authorities, ensuring the Arts are integral to local Community Plans and local integrated arts strategies.

Pioneering work has already been done in 2020/21 highlighting the significant contribution the Arts can make to urban renewal and regeneration, tackling inequalities and contributing to social cohesion.

In 2021/22, we will work with Derry City and Strabane District Council on the Resilience Programme. A similar initiative with Belfast City Council has helped arts organisations undergo a process of change aimed at making them

more effective and efficient; improve their resilience and investment readiness.

We will explore options for a SLA/MOU for two local authorities outside of Belfast based on their community plans.

14. Cultural Heritage

NI has rich cultural heritage assets which have untapped visitor potential. Working in partnership with the Historic Environment Division, Tourism NI and Heritage Lottery Fund, we will continue to collaborate on a wider research programme designed to understand audience/visitor appetite for future events. We aim to deliver projects to animate designated sites of heritage interest through the arts, building on the success of the projects commissioned in 2019/20 under Embrace the Place.

15. Improving Operations & Service

We are committed to improving our performance, ensuring that we have the focus, innovation and adaptability to face an ever-changing environment.

This includes being flexible within the constraints of existing resources as well as re-purposing funds to meet immediate need and close collaboration with our parent department, including co designing of any required future funding programmes.

We recognise the importance of investing in our people and their learning development, strengthening relationships with our clients and ensuring that our grant programmes and processes work effectively and create a culture of partnership with our stakeholders.

Given the increased importance of digital platforms for the presentation and distribution of work for artists and the arts sector, we will employ a digital officer to work in partnership with a cohort of arts organisations to take this forward.

During the current Covid-19 pandemic, The Arts Council's priority has been to digitise as many processes and procedures as possible to maintain business continuity; from online staff/client meetings to corporate communications, from finance to online client applications and programme design.

The additional demands placed on the current ACNI website in 2020/21 and its digital infrastructure, have exacerbated the problems of outdated legacy software and ability to reach audiences and stakeholders. ACNI will assess the need and explore options to develop a new website and improve the process of digital transition across its services.

16. Digital Developments

The Covid-19 crisis has had a severe impact on the arts sector in NI posing unprecedented challenges to artists and arts organisations trying to reach audiences.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the challenges of filling gaps in digital capacity and know-how within the NI arts sector, of improving access to the arts online for marginalized groups, and the need to review and re-set the models of delivery of the arts in NI, have become ever more significant.

A digital development strategy for the arts in NI over the next three years is an objective for ACNI. Digital technology and digital arts content, offer an opportunity to look at how we can achieve a strong and resilient arts sector that properly reflects our times and challenges.

A programme of work to audit the current digital capacity in the sector, to identify digital ambitions for the arts and to kick-start a Digital Mentoring Programme, are all important next steps. ACNI aims to build new collaborative networks between the arts and the creative industries sectors in NI. ACNI will help support the growth of digital knowledge and skills that allow arts organisations to improve their e-marketing and use of social media, to convert live audiences to online audiences, to drive ecommerce and live streaming, to innovate with VR and new technologies and create quality, engaging, digital arts content for all.

17. Annual Funding Survey

The Annual Funding Survey (AFS) captures a range of information from each arts organisation, including finances, employment, audience size, participation levels and case study examples. Gathering this data not only provides an overview of the activity levels of the sector but also assists us in monitoring our clients' performance against their annual targets and helps to fulfil and improve our reporting function to DfC.

In addition we will continue to undertake a number of key surveys designed to capture and track the impact of the pandemic on the arts and creative sector to inform evidence based policy making within the department.

18. Internal key points of action during 2021/22

We realise that the relationship with our clients should be clearly structured and easily understood. To help this process we have a Service Charter that sets out what our clients can expect from us and what we expect of them. We are also committed to regular engagement with the arts sector to make sure that our programmes and processes are relevant and effective. This year we will establish terms of reference for the independent deliberative

forum which will assist the Arts Council take forward its programme of work in relation to the needs of rural and minority ethnic communities and their access to the arts.

Acknowledging the importance of continuous improvement and aligning purpose, people, and values, we are focused on updating the Department on a regular basis.

- Continue to develop our advocacy messages in the context of COVID -19, the Programme for Government agenda and the priorities of the Department for Communities;
- Continue to coordinate with other Arts Councils to assess the impact of Brexit on the arts and cultural sector.

19. Corporate Governance

The Arts Council has a Finance Committee to oversee how budgets are managed and an Audit and Risk Committee which oversees a programme of work of internal and external audit and compliance. It also reviews the Risk Register on a quarterly basis. This work programme is led by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services.

All committees report directly to the Board. The Board also receives quarterly updates of delivery against the targets of the Business Plan.

In the year 2021/22 we welcome our new Chair and Vice-Chair and a further five Council members which will bring the complement of Board membership to twelve.

20. Resources and Budget 2021/22

The Arts Council receives expenditure funds from two main sources: Exchequer funding from the NI Budget through DfC and Lottery funds from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

The Exchequer budget figure remains the same at £10,197,000. The Net Lottery income for the year is forecast at £9,944,000.

In the current economic climate, the Arts Council is constantly reviewing its overhead costs. The budget for 2021/22 is £671,958.

The Arts Council continues to monitor costs rigorously to ensure we meet our statutory guidelines and maintain corporate governance standards.

We are developing business cases to the Department to secure capital resources to deliver four different programmes. These will cover small items of equipment and minor works, health and safety equipment in response to Covid 19, musical instruments for bands, groups and individuals and the purchase of artwork for the collection which in turn will support artists.

Appendix 1: Headline Achievements from 2020/21

In a year dominated by the Coronavirus pandemic, the Arts Council and the creative and cultural sector adapted quickly to the crippling impact of lockdown and social distancing restrictions on the livelihoods of those working in the sector. The Arts Council responded with a series of Emergency Funding Support Programmes, outlined below. With theatres and venues closing their doors and community engagement and live public-facing interactions severely curtailed, artists found innovative ways to reach out to old and new audiences, often capitalizing on online and digital platforms as they continued to entertain, inspire, and lift the nation's spirits.

Department for Communities Emergency Funding

Prior to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Culture Recovery Fund of £1.57bn, the Department for Communities released £4m emergency funds to the Arts Council in the form of a Creative Support Fund. Through the Barnett consequential, the NI Executive received £33m of the Culture Recovery Fund, £29m of which the Department allocated in the form of emergency funding for the arts, culture, heritage and language sectors. With the Department's investment, The Arts Council, in addition to its Annual Funding, SIAP, National Lottery Project Funding, Young Musicians' Platform, Creative Seed Fund and Musical Instruments schemes, administered emergency funding programmes in 2020-21, as follows:

Arts Council Emergency Funding Programmes

- **Artists Emergency Programme**

For individuals' expressions for projects ending March 2021. Max award available £5,000. 224 awards totalling £547,320

- **Organisations Emergency Programme I**

For small and medium sized arts organisations to enable them to continue producing creative work, assist with operational costs and to help plan for recovery. Max award available £25,000. 150 awards totalling £1,949,113

- **Organisations Emergency Programme II (second call)**

For organisations' operational costs; adapting to Covid-19 restrictions; producing online content. Max award available £25,000. 62 awards totalling £900,859

- **Individuals Emergency Resilience Programme**

For individuals – individuals do not have to 'make work' as a condition of an award; there is no requirement to do anything over and above what may sustain their practice as an artist or creative sector worker. Awards of £1,200, £3,000 or £5,000. 1,082 awards totalling £3,834,200

- **Health and Safety Capital Programme**

For small to medium scale organisations in the cultural sector to cover any Covid-19 works or purchases required in order for the organisation to become functional again. 53 awards totalling £776,950

- **Small Capital Programme**

For organisations to purchase equipment and/or carry out minor works to their premises which will enhance their artistic services. Priority given to equipment and minor works which address Covid-19 requirements in working remotely and/or improves the accessibility of the arts. 69 awards totalling £658,877

- **Stability and Renewal Programme for Organisations**

For stabilising organisations financially to prevent closure and/or to allow continued delivery of outcomes and underpin longer-term changes; and support the development of Renewal Plans where appropriate. 168 awards totalling £10,457,126

- **Individuals Emergency Resilience Programme 2**

For individuals, to sustain and build creative, professional and technical skills and adapt to the new market conditions that have been brought about as a result of Covid-19. Priority given to those who have been unable to access other forms of financial support from Government or other sources. 1,563 awards totalling £6,919,794

Creative Industries Seed Fund

For artists, arts and creative industries organisations to encourage cross sectoral collaboration, drive innovation in technology and to create new contents, products, services and experiences. Two levels of award available £25,000 and £10k. A total of 26 awards were made, 7 awards of up to £25k and 19 awards of up to £10k, totalling £363,898; including £86,398 in funding from Future Screens NI.

The Creative Response

The response of the arts community to the Coronavirus crisis, across the board in NI, has been nothing short of inspirational. The sector quickly found new ways to engage with audiences, particularly online, ensuring that people continued to have the opportunity to enjoy and participate in the widest range of creative experiences. These ranged from online circus skills tutorials with Streetwise Theatre and songwriting lessons with Gary Lightbody, to recorded broadcasts of local productions such as The Belfast Ensemble's 'Abomination: a DUP Opera', to the very best local and international artists performing online at the Belfast International Arts Festival, and a live streamed edition of Culture Night Belfast 2020. The growing reliance on online and digital output has dramatically expanded the reach of our arts organisations. Locally-produced arts have never before

been so widely accessible to so many people, from all walks of life and from all parts of NI, and beyond. The following is just a snapshot, an illustration, of the remarkable work that NI's artists and arts organisations have produced during and in response to the pandemic, with the support of Arts Council Emergency Programme funding through the Department for Communities.

- **Culture in Quarantine**

A collaboration between BBC Arts, the Lyric Theatre and BBC NI, with support from the Arts Council, Culture in Quarantine commissioned six new short dramas from some of NI's biggest names in writing and acting, including Lisa McGee (Derry Girls), David Ireland (Cyprus Avenue) and Conleth Hill (Game of Thrones). 'Splendid Isolation: Lockdown Drama', broadcast on BBC NI in June and available thereafter on BBC iPlayer, explored the positive and negative aspects of social isolation and lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It was nominated for a Royal Television Society award for Best Drama.

- **The Broads**

Actress and writer Maria Connolly transformed herself into Judy Garland for her new musical show 'The Broads', one of the first live, outdoor, socially distanced performances to take place in NI since the start of the pandemic. 'The Broads' was designed to appeal to older people living in isolation and Maria, accompanied by Christina Nelson as Bette Midler and Roisin Gallagher as Marilyn Monroe, took the show to hospitals and care homes, where they entertained and improved the mental wellbeing of more than 500 patients and staff.

- **Immersive theatre for vulnerable children**

Replay Theatre Company took a converted transit van on the road to bring a special performance to children across NI, shielding at home. Created for children with profound and multiple learning disabilities and complex needs, COCO created a full sensory experience through its use of sound, colour and texture. Written and performed by Mary McGurk and directed by Andrew Stanford, each performance was tailored to just one child and their family, creating a very different and intimate theatre experience.

- **Ryan McMullan tribute to NHS**

Rising international star Ryan McMullan collaborated with the Ulster Orchestra to record a fittingly poignant new song, written and performed in tribute to the commitment and contribution of the NHS and its staff during the Covid19 pandemic. 'If This Is The End', which was commissioned by the Arts Council and released in December 2020, is a eulogy for those who have lost someone during 2020 and have been unable to mourn their loved ones in the usual way.

- **Under a Christmas Sky**

Many of NI's finest musicians, poets and storytellers performed in a special cultural highlight, 'Under a Christmas Sky', produced by Snow Water and filmed live at the Ulster Folk Museum. One cultural treat was revealed online each day in the lead up to Christmas, and on Christmas Eve the full programme was broadcast locally and showcased internationally to digital audiences across Europe and North America.

Arts Council Publications

- **Research on the impact of Covid-19**

The Arts Council conducted and published a series of new research reports to assess the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the arts and cultural sector in NI. Surveys of ticketed cultural organisations and the wider arts sector helped to inform 'Curtain Call', the business case to the Department for additional resources required to support the sector through the crisis.

- Box Office Survey (July)
- Impact of Coronavirus on the NI Arts Organisations (August)
- Arts & Cultural Engagement Levels in NI during the Covid-19 Pandemic (November)
- 2019-/20 Annual Funding Survey (January)

- **In the Bubble of our making**

In August, The Arts Council published 'In the bubble of our making: reopening the arts in NI', a comprehensive guidance manual to support the safe reopening of arts performance venues, in full compliance with current government guidelines and regulations, closed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- **Prioritising Digital Channels**

The Arts Council as a body reacted quickly to the Covid-19 crisis and prioritised its digital channels for all stakeholder communications. This included the use of all of its social media platforms to communicate the latest guidance on Covid-19 to the sector; regular updates on government advice and regulations and on available emergency funding via a weekly e-newsletter; a 'What's On' compendium, initiated at the start of the pandemic, which promotes activities and events organised by arts organisations and an internal staff e-newsletter created to keep staff in the loop. Subscription to the external weekly e-newsletter has grown from a pre-Covid basis of c.3,000 to more than 10,000.

Appendix 2: Resource allocation

Table 1: 2021/22 Resource allocation by programme

Programme	Exchequer (£)	Lottery (£)	Total (£)
Annual Funding	8,599,955	4,405,070	13,005,025
Arts & Older People		100,000	100,000
Ethnic minorities mentoring and residencies programme (pilot)		50,000	50,000
Creative Schools		100,000	100,000
NI Screen		225,000	225,000
Project Funding		2,000,000	2,000,000
Public Art		50,000	50,000
Resilience Derry and Strabane		100,000	100,000
Rural Arts		500,000	500,000
Small Grants		250,000	250,000
Commissioning		150,000	150,000
Support for Individual Artists (SIAP)	91,560	128,000	219,560
Young People & Wellbeing		160,000	160,000
Arts Development Fund		100,000	100,000
Creative Industries		175,000	175,000
Staff costs	1,111,099	1,078,901	2,190,000
Other operating expenditure		288,372	288,372
Overheads	383,586		383,586
Strategic Development	28,800		28,800
Central advisors and procurement	7,000		7,000
Lottery: Other Operating Costs Direct		56,000	56,000

Appendix 3: 2021/22 Deliverables:

No	2021/22 Business Plan Actions
1.	Monitor performance of our annually funded organisations, through regular meetings, quarterly reports and the Annual Funding Survey to ensure delivery against our strategy and wider Government priorities.
2.	Incentivise innovation and experimentation through our grant-making processes and develop a commissioning programme.
3.	Develop good-practice guidelines with the sector for self-assessment of creative work with an initial focus on the theatre sector.
4.	Continue to invest in strategic programmes which build resilience in the arts sector.
5.	Continue the partnership with DfC and universities in NI to further understand the creative industries and skills development needs.
6.	Re-introduce the Creative Apprenticeships scheme and develop a Creative Bursaries Programme (subject to the availability of funding).
7.	Review art form classifications to ensure their continued relevance in light of digital developments and implement a rolling policy review commencing with drama and visual arts.
8.	Invest in the Creative Schools Partnership (The Executive Office, Education Authority and ACNI) to improve creative and educational outcomes for children living in deprived areas.
9.	Develop a business case for a wider rural needs programme and explore the possibility of a joint programme with other Lottery distributors in NI.
10.	Review Local Authority Community Plans to identify joint working opportunities.
11.	Develop a business case for a disability access audit of venues.
12.	Progress UK Access Card Scheme, reflecting the needs of NI venues
13.	Establish a working partnership with the Creative Industries Institute to create research and career opportunities for artists
14.	Develop a strategic audience development plan through our partnership with Thrive.
15.	Develop a Digital training programme in partnership with The Space.
16.	Develop a Digital Development Strategy and monitor progress
17.	Continue strategic engagement with Tourism NI to increase market visibility and brand awareness of arts culture and heritage assets

18.	Sustain international residencies and showcasing opportunities to enhance the global reputation of artists from NI
19.	Build capacity for arts organisations through Blueprint and Resilience programmes
20.	Work in partnership with DfC and Assembly Committees to grow investment in the arts and contribute to an arts and cultural strategy for NI
21.	Develop a communications plan and an advocacy plan - Continue to demonstrate impact and the value of the arts to stakeholders through communication campaigns and activities.
22.	Continue to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on artists and arts organisations.
23.	Establish data sharing agreements with Ulster University and Queens University Belfast for research purposes.
24.	Monitor the ongoing need for Covid-19 related emergency interventions and evaluate existing programmes
25.	Develop an annual strategic research and development programme to demonstrate the role of the arts through research and evaluation.
26.	Establish a deliberative forum around rural policy and intercultural expression using the insights from the research to design.

Appendix 4: Performance Measurement

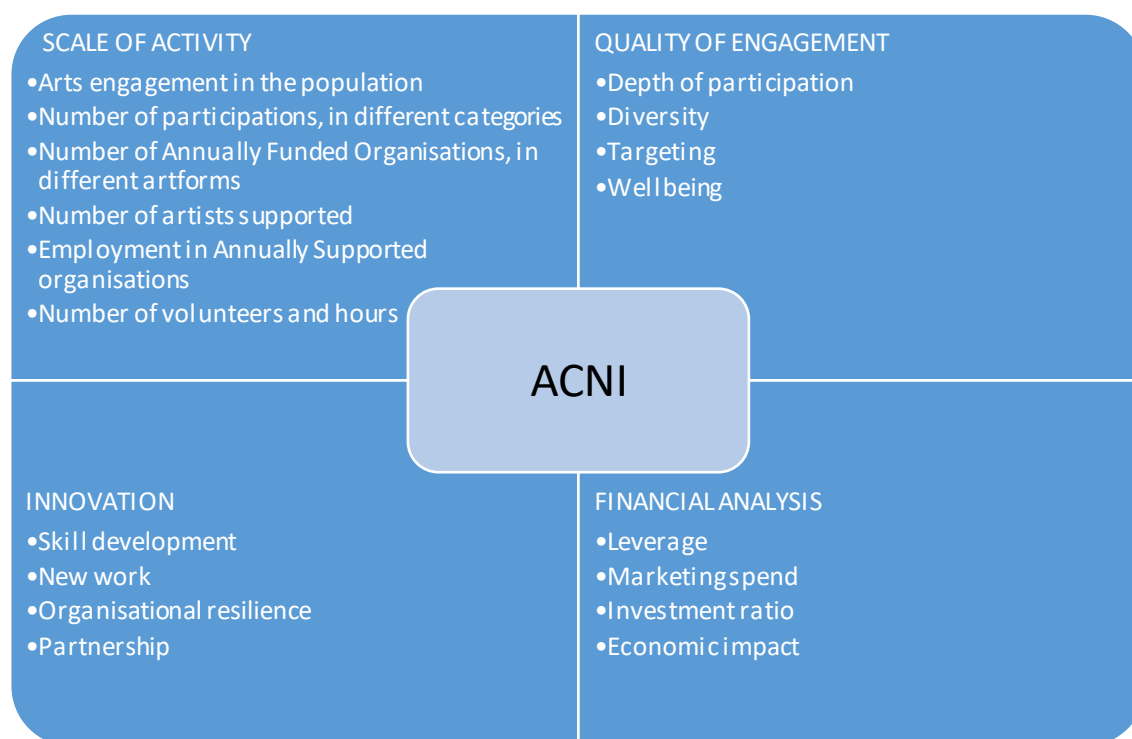
The following performance indicators have been developed to measure the success of the draft Five Year Plan.

The Arts Council commissioned a performance management framework which underpins the Five Year Framework. This, independent work by Annabel Jackson Associates, supports the preferred Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) system used by government. A breakdown of key performance indicators associated with each of the four domains can be found in Table 3.

The method reflects a balanced portfolio of measures that acknowledge trade-offs and inherent weaknesses in the collection and aggregation of data.

A flexible balanced portfolio of measures has been developed across the following dimensions: scale of activity, quality of activity, financial performance and innovation. This system will be developed over time as data systems and learning is strengthened.

Table 3: Five Year Framework Key Performance Indicators



Activities associated with this year's business plan have been aligned to the framework designed for the 5 Year Plan. These details are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Alignment of 2021/22 Deliverables to the 5 Year Framework KPIs:

SCALE OF ACTIVITY 1. Monitor performance of our annually funded organisations 4. Continue to invest in strategic programmes to build resilience 6. Re-introduce the Creative Apprenticeships scheme and develop a Creative Bursaries Programme 8. Continue to invest in the Creative Schools Partnership 9. Develop plans for a rural needs programme and explore the possibility of a joint programme with other Lottery distributors in NI 10. Review Local Authority Community Plans to identify joint working opportunities 18. Sustain international touring, residencies and showcasing opportunities 19. Build capacity for arts organisations through Blueprint and Resilience programmes 23. Establish data sharing agreements with Ulster University and Queens University Belfast for research purposes	QUALITY OF ENGAGEMENT 3. Develop good-practice guidelines for self-assessment of creative work 11. Develop a business case for a disability access audit of venues. 14. Develop a strategic audience development plan 23. Establish data sharing agreements with local government and Policy Evidence Centre 25. Develop an annual strategic research and development programme to demonstrate the role of the arts through research and evaluation.
INNOVATION 2. Incentivise innovation via a commissioning programme 5. Maintain partnerships with DfC and universities to meet creative industry skill development needs 7. Review the art form classification system 12. Progress UK Access Card Scheme 13. Work with Creative Industries Institute to enhance opportunities for artists 15. Build sectors digital capabilities in partnership with The Space 16. Develop a digital development strategy and monitor progress 22. Continue to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on artists and arts organisations 26. Establish a deliberative forum around rural policy and intercultural expression using the insights from the research to design.	FINANCIAL ANALYSIS 17. Increase market visibility and brand awareness of cultural assets in partnership with Tourism NI 20. Working in partnership with DfC and Assembly Committees to grow investment in the arts and contribute to an arts and cultural strategy for NI 21. Continue to develop case studies through communication campaigns. 24. Monitor the ongoing need for Covid-19 related emergency interventions.