

Your feedback, Our response

Client Satisfaction Survey, June 2025

Introduction and Context

We value the insights provided through the recent Client Satisfaction Survey. The feedback helps us to understand where we are succeeding and where we must improve. As a next step, we are working on developing actions by team to ensure we respond in a meaningful and practical way to what we've heard.

Our work takes place in a wider context of significant change. Between 2014 and 2024, the number of Arts Council staff decreased by 11 posts, while the number of applications processed increased by 137.2%. This represents a substantial increase in demand and administrative load, alongside a reduction in internal capacity. Despite these pressures, we remain committed to delivering high-quality support and funding services to the sector. Our work is grounded in the social outcomes expected by our public and Lottery funders, and we continue to adapt and evolve our processes to meet those responsibilities. The insights from the Client Satisfaction Survey are essential in helping us do so. Below, you will find some initial actions we are taking in response to the feedback.

You said:

The majority of clients are satisfied with the Arts Council, especially those who were successful in their funding applications and those based in rural areas.

We are doing:

We are proud of the progress made in rural engagement and will continue to invest in and expand REAP to deliver value to audiences, participants, and artists and organisations working outside of urban areas.

You said:

Artists with disabilities reported more challenges understanding guidance materials, navigating our systems, and engaging with staff.

We are doing:

We are concerned by the challenges experienced by artists with disabilities navigating our systems. We are going to build on current efforts to address these issues, including:

- We will work with our key resource organisations to provide support, training and networking opportunities for artists with disabilities.
- We will continue to improve the accessibility and clarity of guidance materials user through testing, and accessible formats.
- We will continue to deliver disability awareness training for all staff.

- We will continue to support the development of the All-In Scheme that seeks to help creative and cultural organisations improve access, welcome new visitors and increase overall attendance.
- A disability focused survey to further test and enhance website accessibility will be developed in collaboration with the disabled led arts organisation, the University of Atypical.

You said:

The most common suggestion made by clients was to develop a simpler application process.

We are doing:

- We have taken steps to simplify programme application processes. This includes rationalising the number of questions needed and reminding clients they have an application open but not submitted.
- A new grants portal is in development aimed at improving the user experience.

You said:

Clients want more transparency, clearer communication, and more meaningful engagement opportunities—including mentoring, knowledge exchange, and support to innovate.

We are doing:

- Please note that if you wish to raise a confidential concern of a sensitive nature in relation to any matter or individual associated with the Arts Council or its funding, please use the following email address: confidentialreporting@artscouncil-ni.org
- We are strengthening the support we offer to unsuccessful applicants, including clearer feedback, better signposting, and opportunities to reapply with improved applications.
- We are strengthening our capacity to produce and share research and evaluation that captures the impact of the arts and the needs of our sector. This includes more accessible data, artist-led insight, and ongoing dialogue with communities who feel underrepresented.
- We are designing new mentoring and peer-learning models to support underrepresented groups.
- We are rethinking how we connect people across the sector. We'll be offering new and revitalised networking opportunities, with a specific focus on experimentation, innovation, and social impact.

You said:

29% of clients found the website difficult to navigate, with rebranding and redesigning the website the most common suggestions for improvements.

We are doing:

The new ACNI website was launched in April 2023. It has been designed to meet current government accessibility requirements and was thoroughly tested for user experience (UX) during its development. We continue to closely monitor all aspects of the site in order to enhance optimise performance, content and navigation.