



ACNI Strategy Update

www.artscouncil-ni.org



ACNI Purpose

www.artscouncil-ni.org

Statutory duties

To **develop and improve** the **knowledge**, appreciation and practice of the arts

To increase **public access** to, and **participation** in, the arts

To **advise the Department** and other government departments, district councils and other bodies on **matters relating to the arts**

Provide **financial assistance** to persons or bodies

Co-operate with **other bodies** established within the United Kingdom or outside the United Kingdom

Carry out, assist or co-operate with other persons in carrying out, **research into** and studies concerning matters relating to the arts

National Lottery policy directives I

ACNI assessment of the **needs of the arts** and its priorities for addressing them

Inspire **children and young people**, awakening their interest and involvement in arts

Foster **local community initiatives** which bring people together, enrich the public realm and strengthen community spirit

Support **volunteering** and encourage volunteering in the arts

Encourage **new talent, innovation** and **excellence** and help people to develop new skills

National Lottery policy directives II

Involve **public and local communities** in making policies and setting priorities

Ensure money is distributed for projects which promote **public good** rather than private gain

Partnership funding or contributions in kind from other sources

Sustainable development and **increasing access** and participation for all



ACNI Strategic context

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Strategic Context

NICS Missions	People	Improving Life Opportunities
	Planet	Green Growth
	Prosperity	Increasing Employability and Productivity



Department for
Communities

An Roinn
Pobal

Department for
Communities

[#OurGiantAmbition](#)

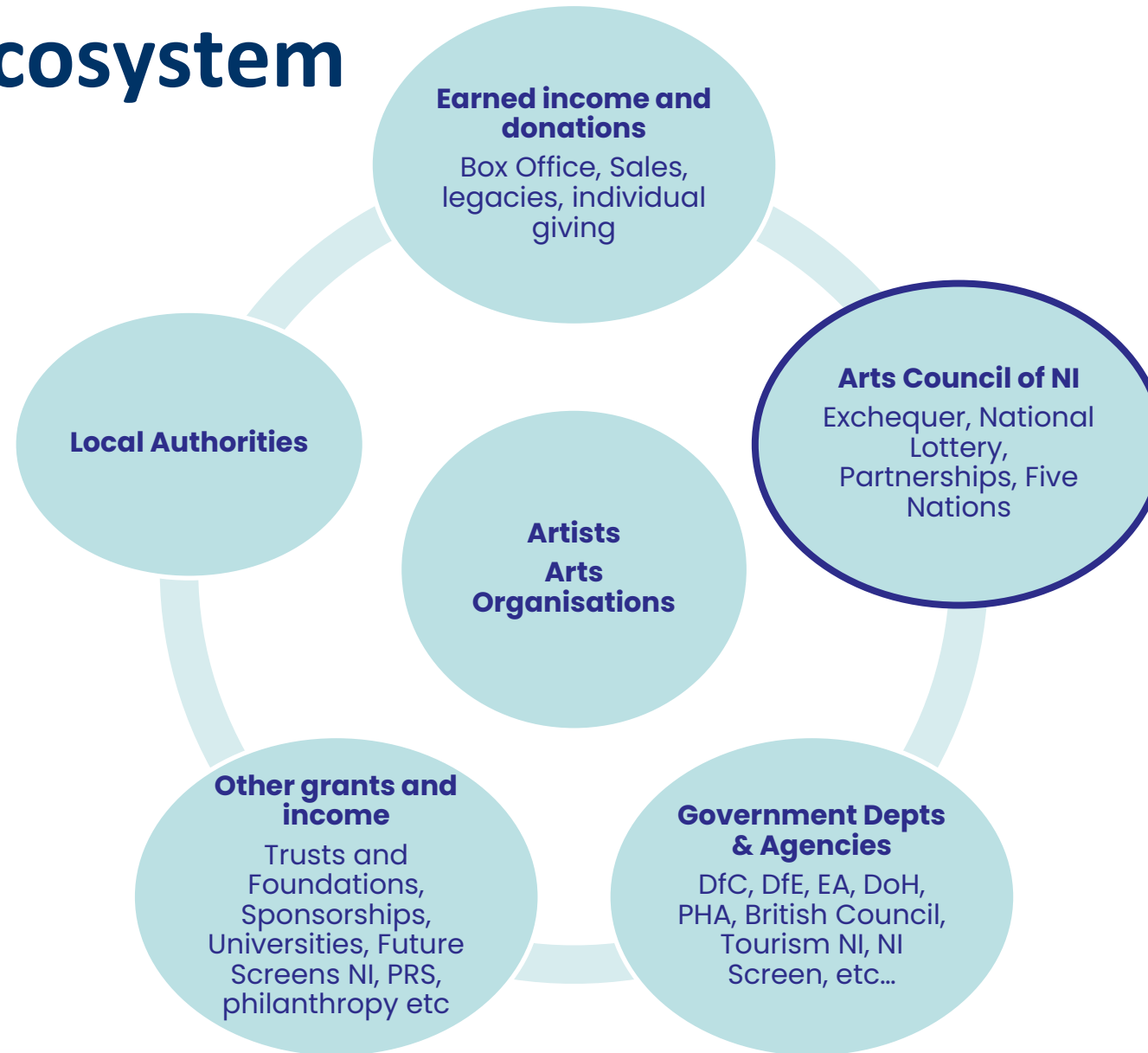


Everyone can reach their potential



10-year vision for CAH

Arts funding ecosystem



Sector challenges considered in strategy priorities

Short term funding
cycles

Standstill funding over
a decade

Lack of **capital
investment**

Sector **capacity**

Limited opportunities
for **individuals** to lead
larger projects

Competition for
**emerging/early
career** artists in high
demand programmes

Talent retention and
decline in workforce

Health and **wellbeing**
and **fair pay** for artists

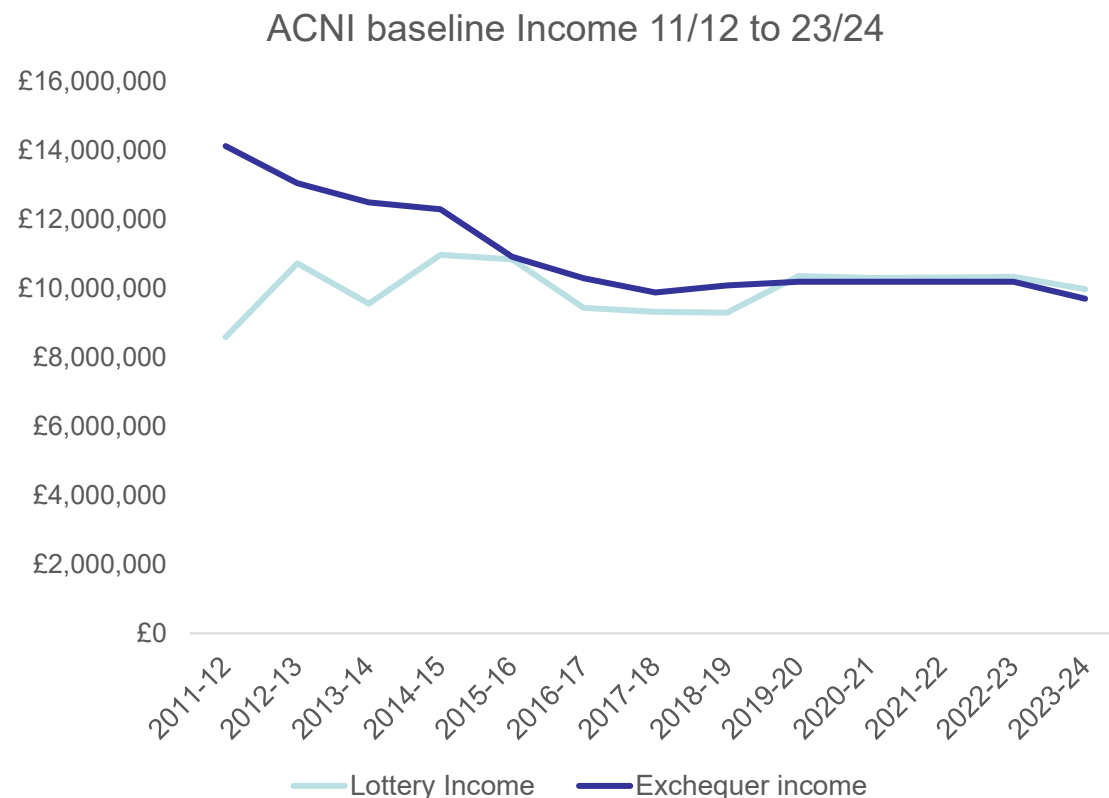
Artistic **development**
(touring,
commissioning new
work, innovation/risk
taking)

How wider government
values arts

Response to **climate
emergency**

ACNI and Sector –
**Representation and
EDI**

Financial context



23-24 budget **£9.708m** – **40% cut** over 10 years when inflation is considered

Per capita this is much less than equivalent counterparts (**£5.07** compared to **£10.51** in Wales and **£21.90** in ROI – excluding basic income scheme and Creative Ireland investment)

ACNI needs an **additional £23.11m** on top of its £9.682m to better align us to our counterparts and deliver for the sector

ACNI also distributes National Lottery funds and this income has also been declining in real terms and is currently budgeted at **£9.984m** (23-24)



ACNI Strategic plan

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Sector engagement - draft

Arts Council of Northern Ireland Strategic Plan, 2024-29

A five year plan for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland to support the development of the arts

DRAFT VISION: 'To create a sustainable arts sector in Northern Ireland and ensure everyone has access to arts. We believe arts can enrich the lives of all people, regardless of background or circumstance and that everyone should be able to participate in and experience the arts'



1 Outcomes for the Art Sector

1.1 A more financially resilient and stable sector

Delivery priorities

1. Generate more income for the arts.
2. Pursue a different approach to investment that is long term and outcomes-based.

1.2 A sector that is more attractive to work in, more committed to workforce development and more inclusive

Delivery priorities

3. Incubate, protect and grow artistic talent.
4. Ensure that the arts draw on and reflect society's full range of backgrounds and perspectives.

1.3 A sector that can develop through experimentation and innovation

Delivery priorities

5. Enable innovation and artistic risk-taking in the sector.

2 Outcomes for Everyone in Society

2.1 A sector that is more responsive to key social issues, promotes social cohesion and cares about the environment

Delivery priorities

6. Invest in arts and cultural projects that address key social issues including social cohesion.
7. Increase public engagement with climate change by empowering the sector, and reduce the carbon footprint of funded organisations.

2.2 More people, regardless of background, can access arts experiences

Delivery priorities

8. Invest in projects that deepen, widen and diversify audiences.

2.3 A sector that is more valued across all government departments

Delivery priorities

9. Demonstrate to policy makers, decision makers and the public the positive impact of the arts on society.
10. Work as an effective and efficient organisation.

Sector engagement – revised summary

Draft Arts Council of Northern Ireland – 10 year strategic plan (24-34 - TBC)



MISSION To develop and champion the arts in Northern Ireland through investment and advocacy.

VISION A society where all people can experience a thriving arts sector that is recognised as essential to creativity, well-being and social and economic prosperity.

VALUES

- Expertise:** We use our experience and expertise to support the arts sector in NI through investing, advocating and evidencing the impact of the sector.
- Inclusion:** We recognise the importance of diversity in the arts sector and are committed to being inclusive and accessible to all.
- Collaboration:** We value our strong relationships with partners and their ability to enhance arts programmes across NI and beyond.
- Integrity:** We are open, transparent, and fair in how we distribute public funding.

1 Outcomes for the Arts Sector

Outcome 1: A more financially stable arts sector.

1. We will generate more income for the arts.
2. We will pursue an approach to investment in the arts that is long term and outcomes based.

Outcome 2: A sector that develops and looks after its people and is more inclusive.

3. We will create the conditions to grow artistic talent and develop the wider arts workforce.
4. We will ensure that the arts sector in Northern Ireland is inclusive and reflects society.

Outcome 3: A sector that is more supported to develop through experimentation and innovation.

5. We will enable innovation and artistic risk taking in the arts sector.

*3 year business plans will support the delivery of our long term goals

2

Outcomes for Society

Outcome 4: A sector that contributes to social and economic benefits and cares about the environment

6. We will support arts projects that address contemporary societal challenges.
7. We will support the sector and act as a catalyst to drive awareness, engagement and positive change in response to climate change.

Outcome 5: More people from all backgrounds can enjoy arts experiences.

8. We will invest in the arts sector to deepen, widen and diversify audiences.

Outcome 6: A sector that is more valued across society and government.

9. We will work in partnership to demonstrate to policy makers, decision makers and peoples in Northern Ireland the positive impact of the arts.
10. We will work as an effective and efficient organisation.

Our refreshed Mission & Vision

Our mission

To **develop** and **champion** the arts in Northern Ireland through **investment** and **advocacy**.

Our vision

A society where **all people** can experience a **thriving arts sector** that is recognised as **essential** to creativity, well-being and social and economic prosperity

Our new Values

Our work is underpinned by the following core values. These characterise how we interact with everyone.

Expertise

We use our experience and expertise to support the arts sector in NI through investing, advocating and evidencing the impact of our sector.

Inclusion

We recognise the importance of diversity in the arts sector and are committed to being inclusive and accessible to all.

Collaboration

We value our strong relationships with partners, and their ability to enhance arts programmes across NI and beyond.

Integrity

We are open, transparent, and fair in how we distribute public funding.

ACNI refreshed outcomes

What are the **outcomes** we want to achieve. **Why** do we do what we do?

Arts Sector:

A more **financially stable** sector

A sector that **develops, looks after** its people and is **more inclusive**

A sector that is **better supported** to develop through **experimentation** and **innovation**

Society:

A sector that **contributes** to **social** and **economic benefits** and cares about the **environment**

More people from **all backgrounds** can **enjoy** arts experiences

A sector that is **more valued** across society and government

How we will deliver against our outcomes

Refreshed Outcomes and priorities for the **Arts Sector**

A more **financially stable** sector

- We will generate more income for arts in Northern Ireland
- We will pursue an approach to investment in the arts that is long term and outcomes-based

A sector that **develops, looks after** its people and is **more inclusive**

- We will create the conditions to grow artistic talent and develop the wider arts workforce.
- We will ensure that the arts sector in Northern Ireland is inclusive and reflects society.

A sector that is **better supported** to develop through **experimentation** and **innovation**

- We will enable innovation and artistic risk taking in the arts sector.

How we will deliver against our outcomes

Refreshed Outcomes and priorities for **Society**

A sector that **contributes** to **social** and **economic benefits** and cares about the **environment**

- We will support arts projects that address contemporary societal challenges.
- We will support the sector and act as a catalyst to drive awareness, engagement and positive change in response to climate change.

More people from **all backgrounds** can **enjoy** arts experiences

- We will invest in the arts sector to deepen, widen and diversify audiences.

A sector that is **more valued** across society and government

- We will work in partnership to demonstrate to policy makers, decision makers and people in Northern Ireland the positive impact of the arts.
- We will work as an effective and efficient organisation.



ACNI Sector engagement

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Key principles

Genuine engagement – outcomes framework provided for structure but in draft

Underrepresented groups included (ME, rural, young people, working class etc)

Regional spread (Belfast, Derry, Mid-Ulster and across NI)

UK and **Ireland** spread

Mixed sessions – some all organisations, all artists and mixture – mixed artform

Reach and process

July–September 2023

Online and **in-person**

Independent Facilitator and resource organisations support but ACNI representation across all sessions – Director of Strategic Development & Partnerships **co-facilitated**

Ongoing feedback on format throughout

Iterative strategy development

Artists and
organisations

National and
Local
government

Universities

Youth
organisations

Resource
organisations

Local
Authorities

Across art
form (inc
Creative
Industries

Amateur and
professional

Funded and
not funded

Reach and process

24 sessions

262 people

Artists, organisations,
young people etc

Thrive audience
development work

The intention behind this engagement process is to be commended – there were moments of valuable and constructive collaboration. I do feel we were listened too authentically.

the arts needs your help we are a struggling sector and lagging way behind everywhere in the UK and Ireland thank you for working with us today

An enjoyable experience

Really great session

Great to see direction of travel, particularly multi annual funding

It is hard to only be high level when the detail of survival informs everything upwards

Consultations and strategy documents are beasts to run & I think you all have done a great job

Lessons learned

Mixed art form and **mixed artists/organisations** worked well together as they could debate areas

Need to think about how we **engage underrepresented artists** via online methods

Some people said they would have liked **more detail** prior to the event (the full slides)

Some ACNI staff **joined as observers** –we could have explained their role better to participants

Could have focused more on **vision for the future** within constraints and **asked people to prioritise** within that context

Key themes

Consensus on outcomes and interconnections between them – focus on **delivery, priorities and ACNI ability to deliver** within resources is crucial

Expectations of ACNI and **clear messaging** about **what we do** and what we **do not do**

Acknowledgment of **the challenging circumstances** we are operating in but a feeling of **hope and positivity** is important

Key consistent themes across sector

Support for the **6 outcomes** and **10 priorities** but comments on **tone and language**

Support for ACNI arriving at an **ambitious vision and mission** and **positive** messaging

Consensus around **collective role** in advocacy/raising **awareness** about the **value of arts**

Support for **multi-annual funding** cycle and importance of this to meet **other outcomes**

Support for **moving beyond outputs** and considering **other key areas** to develop and **streamlining reporting**

More **sector engagement** and **visibility of ACNI welcomed**

Most debated themes across sector

The **balance of investment** between organisations and artists

Debate over **innovation and digital** – how to modernise/remain relevant but maintain what works well already

Role of ACNI **beyond transactional** and **clarity** on this

Role of ACNI and **climate change** and clarity on activities to do with limited resources

Support for **access** and **audience development** but debate on other areas it would impact

The role of ACNI in supporting **workforce development (e.g. pay rates)**

The ACNI Board have agreed to:

Moving to a **10 year strategic vision** supported by 3 year business plans

Multi annual organisation funding (3 years) and **consolidation** of programmes

Outcomes based investment (rather than solely outputs)

Importance of partnerships **but focus on** what **ACNI can lead**

Review of ACNI resources/structure/capacity to deliver (people, finances and working space)



Strategy structure

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Overarching principles

Deliberately **high level** and flexible

Plain English – accessible language

Succinct (i.e. no more than 30 pages with 1 page strategy for ease)

Measurable (ensuring actions can be measured)

Outcomes based – helpfully demonstrate our 'why' and impact

Collaborative effort – sector, staff, Board, community, audiences input

Contents

Definitions

What we do

Our beliefs/principles

Strategic context

Mission, vision, values

Strategic outcomes and priorities

Case studies

Definitions

Arts

Creative Industries

Innovation

People in the arts

Society

We believe

Public investment as a key component

Value of artists and fair remuneration

Fundamental value of arts beyond economic and social considerations

All **art forms** respected equally

UN Right to Creativity

Added value of **collaboration**

Artistic **expression in all its forms** – including those participating as a hobby



Actions to deliver outcomes

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1: A more financially stable sector

What we aim to achieve

Multi annual investment for arts organisations

Proportionate Outcomes framework for all investment to **demonstrate impacts**

Develop a set of **investment principles** for transparency on our priorities for how we **distribute public money**

Scoping exercise for how to generate more income for the sector

Maintain and build partnerships for additional investment

Support programmes that develop **financial stability** and **capacity**

Continue to support **private sector partnerships** and investment

2: A sector that develops, looks after its people and is more inclusive

What we aim to achieve

Invest in a three year programme to support **artists wellbeing and mental health**

Considering mentoring schemes within Support for Individual Artist Programme (SIAP) and ringfence **support for emerging artists**

Ringfence investment for underrepresented artists/areas (rural, ME, working class)

Refresh existing forums we have for **rural and ME/global majority** voices

Ongoing support **D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse artists** with application support and dedicated funding

Enhance how we measure and report equality (including social class)

Enhance work with **Local Authorities** on **shared interests**

3: A sector that is better supported to develop through experimentation and innovation

What we aim to achieve

Enhance and encourage **R&D** within existing investment

Invest in CI programmes supporting artists working with **new technologies**

Strengthen opportunities for artists to **collaborate** and **exchange ideas**

ACNI to lead **knowledge exchange events** annually on key themes

Ensure **personal development** and **risk taking** is considered within outcomes measurement

4: A sector that contributes to social and economic benefits and cares about the environment

What we aim to achieve

Develop **one National Lottery programme** with underlying key themes

Independently evaluate impacts of lottery investment to support economic and social outcomes

Collect, monitor and share information on lottery investment to support advocacy work

Add climate as a theme within all our investment areas to support /enable artists respond to the **climate emergency**

Encourage **sustainable practices and policies** within all investment

Climate monitoring group to ensure up to date information and knowledge share

5: More people from all backgrounds can enjoy arts experiences

What we aim to achieve

Prioritise **engagement with underrepresented** groups within our investment

Promote and **raise awareness** of activities across media channels

Support **Arts Council NI Collection** and measure impacts and reach across NI

Develop **local, national and international** opportunities for artists to reach more audiences

Promote a **UK wide access scheme ('All in')** to ensure D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse audiences are able to participate fully

Marketing and audience development will be encouraged in our investment

Monitor the NI public perception and participation in arts

6: A sector that is more valued across society and government

What we aim to achieve

Commission **research and evaluation projects** and **share results widely**

Advocacy strategy supported by campaigns to **demonstrate value of arts** to NI

Share case studies and develop an **advocacy webpage** as a sector resource

Work with the sector on **joint advocacy messaging**

Ensure ACNI is **efficient** and **effective** by developing workforce training and **review of resources**

Feedback from sector, partners and staff on **perceptions of our work**

Ensure ACNI provides **value for money** and **streamline process for applicants**

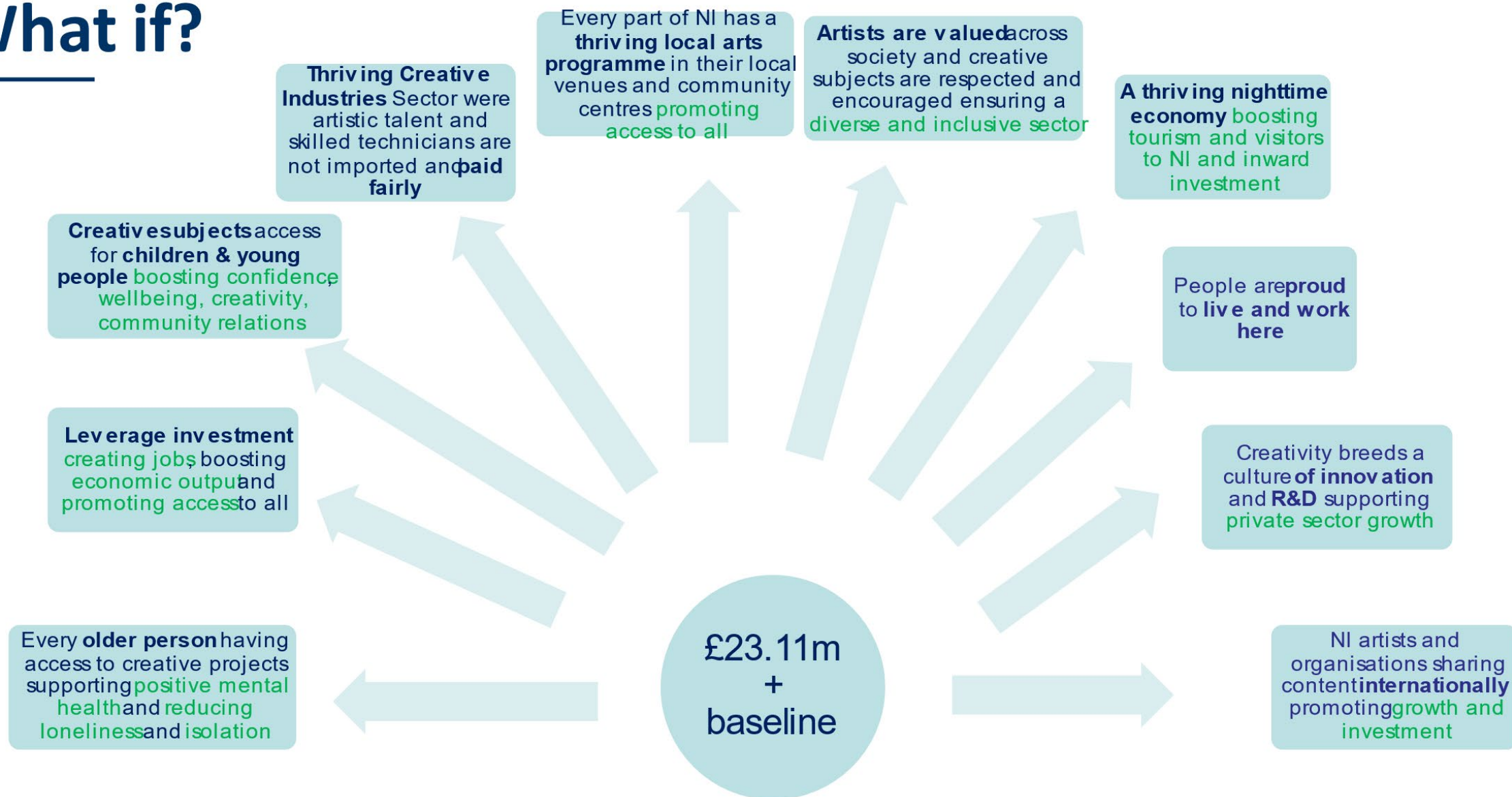
Discussion

What motivates you about the strategy?

What are the **biggest challenges** in delivering the outcomes

What outcome(s) **are important to you** and that you can contribute to?

What if?





Next steps

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Next steps

Develop **three-year** business plan with **SMART** objectives

Develop **outcomes** and activities

Staff and **Sector** update

Finalise **performance monitoring tool**

Finalise **sector feedback document** and publish

Next steps

Equality screening and EQIA of strategy

ACNI Board approval – December

Submit to **DfC** (December)

Public consultation – EQIA (January)

Strategy **Launch** (Q1 FY23–24)



arts
council
of Northern Ireland

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