**Arts Council Funding 2019: how to report on your audience and/or engagement numbers**

The information in this document is intended to help you to present accurate and consistent data about your audience numbers and correctly fill in the relevant section of the AAR template.

We are asking similar organisations to report on audience/engagement data in the same way. This will help us better understand the arts audiences we are reaching through our funding. It will allow us to report on the impact of our funding and make better evidence-based decisions. The Arts Council **strongly recommends** that you implement a robust method of collecting and reporting on audience/engagement data if you do not currently have one.

The responsibility for reporting and collecting this data is yours. It is important that:

* You keep a record of how you have arrived at your audience/engagement figures, and
* Before signing your application, your chair sees your figures and is confident that you are reporting in the most accurate way you can.

What we mean by ‘audience and/or engagement’ numbers

The two key goals of the Arts Council’s current strategy are *the Artist*, and *Public Engagement*.

While for many arts organisations the primary target of their work might be commonly understood as the *audience* for that work, there are other types of engagement with the arts that we would like to know about. Arts organisations attend to the needs of different kinds of publics, audiences and target groups. Some organisations make work for, by, or with children and young people, while others make work targeted at specific communities, often called communities of interest (e.g. people with disabilities, older people, people from minority communities, etc.). Other organisations provide resources, services, support, guidance, advice, advocacy and training to practising artists, and/or to other key providers or facilitators of arts experiences.

Because of this, for the purposes of gathering data, ‘engagement’ is taken to mean four things:

1. **Audience** members, readers, listeners, viewers, attenders, visitors, or others *engaging* with art and arts events (e.g. recitals, concerts, plays, dance performances, art exhibitions, literature, etc.)
2. Members of the public ***participating*** in the making or creation of art, or in arts-related workshops, classes or events (e.g. older people participating in a dance workshop)
3. People ***volunteering*** to work on or at an event (e.g. an arts festival, or as front-of-house staff at a local arts centre). **Note**: this is not the same as *participants* in arts events, where they are actively involved in the creation, making or presenting of work
4. Artists, arts professionals, and/or other practitioners ***taking part*** in workshops, classes, or other developmental activity.

Within the AAR template, we ask you to tell us which of those engaging with your work **paid** to attend and/or engage with the work of your organisation, and those that did so for **free**. You may have a mix of paid and unpaid engagements, or only one type – e.g. a theatre could sell tickets and also issue some complimentary tickets.

What to include

You should include **verifiable** audience numbers for each of your activities in 2018 up to the latest point that you have before submitting your funding application, added to your **projections** for the rest of the year. How these numbers are generated will vary by artform and by activity, but you should include only numbers that you are confident that you can stand over.

We ask for two types of audience/engagement numbers within the AAR template:

* In column J, we ask for the **‘Audience/engagement number – paying’**; this is the number of people who **pay** to engage with, or participate in, the activity. This should include the number of **sales** for a book, publication, or other art object/artefact.
* In column K, we ask for the **‘Audience/engagement number – free’**; this is the number of people who engage with, or participate in, an activity, but who **do not** pay. This would mainly be free events, but might also include complimentary tickets, invitations to the opening of a performance or an exhibition, or copies of a book sent for reviewing/publicity purposes.

Ticketed, paid events, or sales figures

It should be possible to verify your paid numbers by means of box-office data or sales reports. You should be happy that any figures you give for paid engagements are ones that you can stand over.

Activities that are free of charge – ticketed and unticketed, distribution

You may undertake activities for which people engaging are not charged. It may be that you provide some complimentary tickets or artefacts (opening nights, complimentary copies, etc.). You should record these in column K.

Reporting on participatory activities

If your work involves participatory or outreach activities, you should try to record the number of people participating by means of a booking form or a sign-in sheet or another method.

Reporting on street arts and spectacle numbers

If you are reporting on free, outdoor street arts or spectacle or similar non-ticketed events, use a verifiable method for calculating and reporting on your audiences.

Some examples of acceptable methods are set out in the Irish Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle guide: <http://www.isacs.ie/images/documents/ISACS-street-arts-handbook.pdf>

Reporting on exhibition attendance

If an exhibition is not ticketed, use a standard methodology to report attendance.

Exhibition spaces use a variety of methods to record audience numbers, including clickers, sampling, survey activity, and automatic visitor-number recording systems. Include only audience numbers from the method that you use to record these, and keep a detailed record of how you calculated the number you report to the Arts Council.

If you need guidance on how to calculate exhibition attendance, we recommend this report, which will give you an idea of what some visual-arts institutions do, and we recommend that you immediately undertake a robust method of collecting data if you are not already doing so.

<http://artsaudiences.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Here-and-Now-Sketches-of-my-audience-2013-Public-Dissemination.pdf>

What we are looking for in your audience development/engagement plans?

In *Making Great Art Work* the Arts Council undertakes to grow and diversify the range of people who engage with the arts as audiences and participants. We understand audience development to be any activity aimed at making the arts widely accessible. There can be several levels of audience development – e.g.

* **Increasing** audiences – attracting more people with the same profile as the current audience;
* **Deepening** the relationship with audiences – adding value to the audience experience by helping and encouraging an audience to explore related (and non-related) more-complex artforms. This promotes audience loyalty and encourages return visits;
* **Diversifying** audiences – attracting people with a different profile to the current audiences, including people who have had no previous contact with the arts[[1]](#footnote-1)

In section **2.2.2** of the application form, we ask you about your engagement with target groups. As mentioned above, this could be general audience or more-specifically targeted communities. We will assess your plans for audience development and/or public engagement by looking at a variety of areas. You should ensure that:

* The application overall shows an awareness of the need for strategic thinking about audiences, integrated with artistic programming, education work and other elements, including marketing and communications. You should demonstrate that public engagement is part of your organisation’s strategy where your work targets the public.
* The target audience number(s) given in the application refer to actual numbers achieved in the previous year, or the recent past, or benchmarks that are used and are feasible and realistic. If you are projecting a significant increase or decrease, make sure that the rationale for this is clearly demonstrated.
* The plan shows an awareness of how to set audience targets – e.g. use of the tool hosted on [www.artscouncil.ie](http://www.artscouncil.ie/) *How to set an audience target*. Your plan should include several measurable objectives expressed in numeric or other terms that can be monitored.
* That you demonstrate a commitment to retaining current audiences and building new ones.
* That you have allocated sufficient resources to the engagement targets – e.g. that any projected increase in your audience is backed up by a marketing budget or staff allocation for that work.
* The plan shows an understanding of the public-engagement elements of the Arts Council’s strategy for your artform.

1. The Arts Council is currently developing policy in the areas of equality, diversity and inclusion. Please include any information on plans to reach communities at risk of discrimination [↑](#footnote-ref-1)