



Making Great Art Work:

Public Art Policy & Strategy 2018

General Description and Context

The Government Per Cent for Art Scheme creates opportunities for people to engage with contemporary art and artists in everyday settings. The scheme is linked to public infrastructure projects such as schools, social housing, road development and healthcare buildings. Work created under this scheme is most often referred to as public art. The priority for the Arts Council is to maximise the potential of the Per Cent for Art Scheme. We do this through advocacy, advice and support.

The Arts Council's work in this area is an example of its role as a development agency working in collaboration with key stakeholders, including government departments and agencies, local authorities and commissioners. There are numerous examples of Per Cent for Art projects that demonstrate its potential to provide creative opportunities for professional artists and to extend the reach of contemporary art to new and diverse audiences. But there are also challenges in relation to its implementation, which can limit its creative potential.

In [Making Great Art Work](#), the Arts Council identifies two policy priority areas: **the artist** and **public engagement**. In order to deliver on these priority areas in relation to the Per Cent for Art Scheme, the Council will take the following approach over the next three years.

Artists

Per Cent for Art is an important source of funding and can provide significant budgets enabling artists to imagine and create new and ambitious work across all artforms and arts-practice areas. Per Cent for Art is delivered through a commissioning process that supports artists in the development and realisation of new work in specific places, contexts and settings, often in dialogue with a community. The commissioning process needs to be well managed in order to support artists as they make new work and to attract artists who may not have previously engaged with opportunities. First time and one-off commissioners often need greater support and direction, as it can be a complex process, encompassing ideas of creativity and originality.

In terms of artists, the Arts Council's primary interest is in creating an environment where artists who wish to develop public art projects through the Per Cent for Art Scheme have access to the supports necessary to make high-quality and ambitious contemporary public projects.

In further supporting artists, over the next three years the Arts Council will:

- Work with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and other government departments and stakeholders to ensure the Per Cent for Art scheme is effectively implemented and resourced across all relevant new capital programmes, thereby increasing and improving the quality of commission opportunities for artists.
- Promote exceptional and contemporary Per Cent for Art projects and commissioning approaches as best-practice use of the scheme with a wide variety of stakeholders.

- Work to broaden the perception of public art in the use of the scheme to ensure artists from each artform area can avail of opportunities to make ambitious work in public contexts.

Public Engagement

The Per Cent for Art Scheme arises from state infrastructure projects, setting up a unique opportunity for creative public engagement linked to major developments and social change in Ireland. Per Cent for Art projects can forge creative links in communities of interest or place, engaging people both as participants and as new and diverse audiences, including those that might not usually engage with the arts.

To ensure maximum public engagement and benefit from the scheme, and for artists to develop creative links with a people, a time and a place, commissioners should be encouraged and supported to draw down Per Cent for Art and to utilise it in line with national guidelines on best practice.

In further developing public engagement, over the next three years the Arts Council will:

- Work with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, other government departments and stakeholders to ensure the scheme is effectively implemented across all relevant infrastructure programmes, to increase and improve public-engagement opportunities through the scheme.
- Work in collaboration with commissioners and artists to promote best-practice use of the scheme, with a particular focus on creative and effective public engagement.

Specific Development Areas

The Per Cent for Art Scheme applies to capital infrastructure investments across a range of government departments. While the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has a coordinating role, the need to progress and improve the scheme requires an agile approach and structure that can work interdepartmentally.

In 2004 the department advocated for a national approach to the Per Cent for Art scheme through the publication of *General National Guidelines on Public Art: The Per Cent for Art Scheme*. While the guidelines have had some positive impact, such as the development of policies on public art by some local authorities, they need to be updated to address issues of national policy and compliance. The Arts Council seeks to maintain an overview of activity and to influence policy and practice where possible. A previously established Interdepartmental Public Art Coordinating Group is no longer in operation, and there is a timely opportunity to address this, given future capital building programmes.

The Arts Council also manages the public-art developmental website publicart.ie as a national resource. This service includes the provision of advice and information to those undertaking Per Cent for Art commissions, including first-time and one-off commissioners.

We are committed to ensuring that the potential of Per Cent for Art is fully realised. To address this, over the next three years the Arts Council will:

- Work to support capacity building in the area and effective implementation of the scheme, including:
 - Advocating for a review of the 2004 Per Cent for Art guidelines and the development of a national policy to underpin this work.
 - Supporting the development of a coordinated national approach to the Per Cent for Art scheme, including clear and centralised leadership. Promoting a central database of budgets allocated and utilised or of the outcome of projects realised.
 - Working in partnership to establish an evidence base learning on the scheme, including a central database of funding and commissions, which can inform future policy and practice in this area.
- Be informed and knowledgeable on the challenges as well as the achievements around the implementation of Per Cent for Art in line with the commitment to new infrastructure programmes in Ireland.
- Upgrade the Arts Council website publicart.ie to:
 - Enhance users' experience of the website through improved accessibility, technology upgrade and practical interfacing tools.
 - Redevelop content to capture and share learning and document case studies, including new supports for first-time and once-off commissioners, and to explore the use of video and animation as a means of encouraging best practice.

Other *MGAW* Areas of Strategic Interest for Public Art

In the area of young people, children & education, over the next three years the Arts Council will:

- Promote the potential of Per Cent for Art by working in partnership with initiatives such as Creative Schools, the Arts in Education Charter, the Department of Education and Skills to ensure children have excellent and engaging experiences of the arts.
- Develop a productive partnership with the Department of Education and Skills aiming to improve the level of support and resources available to schools undertaking Per Cent for Art projects.
- Encourage schools to expand the range of commissioning approaches through Per Cent for Art, and to consider commissioning a wider range of artforms and arts practices, particularly those that allow young people to actively participate in, or engage with, an arts project.
- Develop case studies on creative Per Cent for Art Projects in school settings, provide support and advice to a number of schools embarking on a commission, and encourage the documentation of these projects with a view to sharing their experiences.