

# Arts Council Customer Service Action Plan 2017–2019



## Introduction

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Welcome to the first Quality Customer Service Action Plan of the Arts Council. It sets out the steps we will take over the next three years to meet our commitments under each of the Government's twelve Quality Customer Service (QCS) Principles.

The Arts Council's Customer Service Charter sets out the principles that underpin our service and our Customer Service Action Plan describes how we will apply these principles.

The Action Plan is also based on the strategic priorities outlined in our Strategy 2016–2025 **Making Great Art Work: *Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland.***

**Making Great Art Work** sets out five priority areas, each with a distinct goal. There are two policy areas that we identify as priorities:

### The Artist

### Public Engagement

In addition we designate three areas of our planning and decision-making as priorities. These are Investment Strategy, Spatial and Demographic Planning and Developing Capacity.

The Arts Council is committed to delivering quality customer services in achieving its mission and high-level goals. We will regularly consult with customers, delivery partners and other stakeholders to measure how we are meeting the commitments in our Customer Service Action Plan. Our annual reports will provide updates on the progress in the implementation of objectives set out in our business plans.

## Principles of Quality Customer Service

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One of the fundamental themes in delivering better government is the achievement of excellence in service for customers. Our Customer Action Plan is an essential tool that outlines our response to specific objectives concerning delivery of services, as specified in the 12 guiding Principles of Quality Customer Service approved by the Government. In respect of each principle, we set out below our implementation strategy over the next three years, including key actions.

The Principles of Quality Customer Service require the Arts Council to:

## 1. Quality Service Standards

### OBJECTIVE

Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which customers can expect, and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

### ACTION PLAN

- Publish the Customer Charter on our website and on our intranet.
- Make the Customer Charter and the Customer Action Plan widely available to our customers, in either hard copy or in electronic format.
- Let customers know, at the point of service, the standard of service they can expect.
- Communicate our Customer Action Plan and service delivery standards to all our staff.
- Promote and increase awareness of the 12 principles of quality customer service set out by the Government among our staff and customers.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

- ✓ Publication and availability of information to customers on service standards on our website and on our intranet.
- ✓ Training in Quality Customer Service is provided for staff.
- ✓ Our annual report will detail our evaluation of the 12 principles of quality customer services against our key performance indicators and will report on progress.

## 2. Equality/diversity

### OBJECTIVE

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (on the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community). Identify and work to eliminate barriers to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and for those facing geographic barriers to service.

### ACTION PLAN

- Ensure that our funding programmes and awards are accessible to all the groups covered by the equality legislation and that the appropriate level of service is available.
- Enhance access and participation of minority cultural and ethnic communities, both internally and across all areas of the Arts Council's work.
- The needs for artists with disabilities are considered from the earliest planning stages across all areas of the Arts Council's work.
- Improve the quality of the information about different forms of access available.
- The needs for artists with disabilities are considered from the earliest planning stages across all areas of the Arts Council's work.
- All council members and staff engage in equality and diversity training, participate in access auditing and policy development.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

- ✓ Adherence to the provisions of Irish Equality legislation.
- ✓ Adherence to the provisions of Children First legislation.
- ✓ Review and update of our cultural diversity policy and strategy.
- ✓ Review and update of our arts and disability policy and strategy.
- ✓ Equality and diversity training is provided to staff and council members.

### 3. Physical access

#### OBJECTIVE

Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

#### ACTION PLAN

- Maintain existing accommodation to a standard acceptable to both customers and staff.
- Regularly update our health & safety policy as personnel, equipment, work methods and legislation changes.
- Maintain a high standard at our reception area for receiving our customers.
- Maintain a high standard at all our events hosted by the Arts Council both internally and externally.
- Disability proofing to be addressed in any new building leases.

#### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

- ✓ Review of health and safety procedures, including a risk assessment.
- ✓ Adequate resources and funding in place for the management and securing of our safety management system.
- ✓ Keep the reception area clean and accessible.
- ✓ Keep facilities for events hosted by the Arts Council clean and accessible.

### 4. Information

#### OBJECTIVE

Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on Public Service websites follows the guidelines on web publication. Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

#### ACTION PLAN

- Use clear language in our forms, policies, information leaflets and grant applications.
- Abide by our commitments in our Customer Charter concerning written communications.
- Continue to develop our website ([www.artscouncil.ie](http://www.artscouncil.ie)) as a key information resource for our customers, as well as promote a greater level of interaction with our stakeholders.
- Review regularly our Information Security Management System (ISMS) Policy.
- Provide a timely, concise and informative Annual Report.
- Comply with the statutory requirements in relation to the processing of requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 (FOI) and the Access to Information on the Environment Regulations (AIE).
- Develop our data protection compliance procedures and policy in line with best practice standards.

#### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

- ✓ The Stakeholders Survey will be included in our Annual Report.
- ✓ Relevant statutory requirements are met.
- ✓ Disclosure log of FOI requests available on website is kept up-to-date.
- ✓ Compliance with Data Protection Acts 2018 GDPR and increased awareness.

## 5. Timeliness and Courtesy

### OBJECTIVE

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer. Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of on-going transactions.

### ACTION PLAN

- Aim to consistently meet the standards of service set out in our Customer Charter and review our performance.
- Ensure that staff are aware of the guidelines and recommended procedures in relation to answering phone calls and dealing with correspondence.
- Staff will provide full contact details in all email communications and utilise voicemail and out of office facilities when not in the office.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

- ✓ Customer feedback through communications from our various stakeholders.
- ✓ Guidelines circulated on our intranet and staff are aware of recommended procedures.
- ✓ All staff provide name, address and direct phone line in their email signatures and use voicemail and out of office replies when unavailable.

## 6. Complaints

### OBJECTIVE

Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

### ACTION PLAN

- Publish our complaints procedure on our website.
- Monitor all written complaints received from the public and the Ombudsman's Office.
- Raise awareness of the customer complaints procedure among staff.
- Address all complaints made in writing (or equivalent) in accordance with the procedures set out in our Customer Charter.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

- ✓ Ease of access to our written complaints procedure and Customer Charter on our website.
- ✓ Written complaints are dealt with in open, accountable and accessible manner
- ✓ Written complaints are dealt with in a fair, sympathetic and timely manner.
- ✓ Information, advice and appropriate training is provided to staff dealing with complaints.

## 7. Appeals

### OBJECTIVE

Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

### ACTION PLAN

- Publish our appeals procedure on our website.
- Monitor the number of appeals received from the public.
- Raise awareness of the customer appeals procedure among staff.
- Ensure minimum delay when dealing with appeals for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to our services.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

- ✓ Ease of access to our appeals procedure and Customer Charter on our website.
- ✓ Appeals are dealt with in an open, accountable and accessible manner.
- ✓ Appeals are dealt with in accordance with our prescribed procedures.
- ✓ Information, advice and appropriate training is provided to staff dealing with appeals.

## 8. Consultation and Evaluation

### OBJECTIVE

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

### ACTION PLAN

- Work with a range of stakeholders, both within the Arts Council and the wider arts sector to promote feedback about our services and how they might be improved.
- Build internal and external consultation into process improvement for all new schemes and awards when the opportunity arises.
- Review our funding programmes, schemes and initiatives to fully embed *Making Great Art Work* priorities.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

- ✓ Act on feedback form our customers and all our various stakeholders.
- ✓ Publication of our Stakeholder Survey in our annual report.
- ✓ Monitor the implementation of the outcomes of our Stakeholder Survey.
- ✓ Our new investment programmes, schemes and initiatives will be aligned to *Making Great Art Work* priorities.

## 9. Choice

### OBJECTIVE

Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice and quality of delivery.

### ACTION PLAN

- Funding programmes, schemes and awards available to our customers in a broad range of artforms and various arts practice areas.
- Increase our service-delivery options where feasible by using new and emerging technology.
- Provide flexibility in our drawdown schedule of payments for grantees.
- Ensure our publications are available, upon request, in a format appropriate to the customer, for example Braille.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

- ✓ Information on all our funding programmes, schemes, awards and initiatives on our website is relevant, accurate and up-to-date.
- ✓ Fully utilise the potential offered by information and communications technology across all our services.
- ✓ Flexibility is provided in our drawdown schedule of payments, if certain financial criteria is met by the grantee.
- ✓ Monitor the number and types of requests for information in other formats.

## 10. Official Languages Equality

### OBJECTIVE

Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

### ACTION PLAN

- Promote the improved delivery of our services through the Irish language by meeting our requirements under the Official Languages Act 2003.
- Publish key documents in Irish and English.
- We will make every effort to accommodate customers who telephone, visit or write to the Arts Council and who wish to conduct their business in Irish.
- Encourage staff to avail of opportunities to use and improve their level of Irish.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

- ✓ Our website is available in Irish and English.
- ✓ Our Annual report is published in both Irish and English.
- ✓ Publish, where possible, the communications and documents of public interest, including application forms and guidelines for many of the Council's awards and schemes in both Irish and English.
- ✓ Training in Irish language available to staff.

## 11. Better Co-ordination

### OBJECTIVE

Foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

### ACTION PLAN

- Develop our partnership with the Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht and with other government departments as well as with local government and with agencies and organisations within and beyond the cultural sector.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

- ✓ Successful collaboration and innovation with other public agencies in their business and management.

## 12. Internal Customer

### OBJECTIVE

Ensure that employees are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.

### ACTION PLAN

- We foster a culture that respects, values and harnesses difference, recognises the talents and skills of all employees, and provides access to employment and promotion to the widest pool of employees and potential employees.
- Our Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) is a core management process; it is integrated into our corporate planning process and provides a meaningful mechanism for employees, jointly with their manager, to identify and plan for learning and development needs in support of continuous learning and career development.
- Provide a safe workplace and working methods that respect the environment and address the needs and responsibilities of employees, customers and contractors in accordance with legislative corporate requirements.
- Maintain up-to-date HR policies and procedures that comply with employment legislation and best practice, and communicate these to all staff.
- Respect the rights of employees to be a member of a recognised trade union.
- Continue to develop our internal communications functions.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

- ✓ A succession plan is in place to mitigate against the loss of expertise and organisational knowledge in the event of employees leaving the Council.
- ✓ Delivery of staff training needs as identified through the PMDS process.
- ✓ A workplace based on inclusion, openness, respect and duty of care.
- ✓ Review regularly our HR policies and procedures and ensure staff has access to same.

