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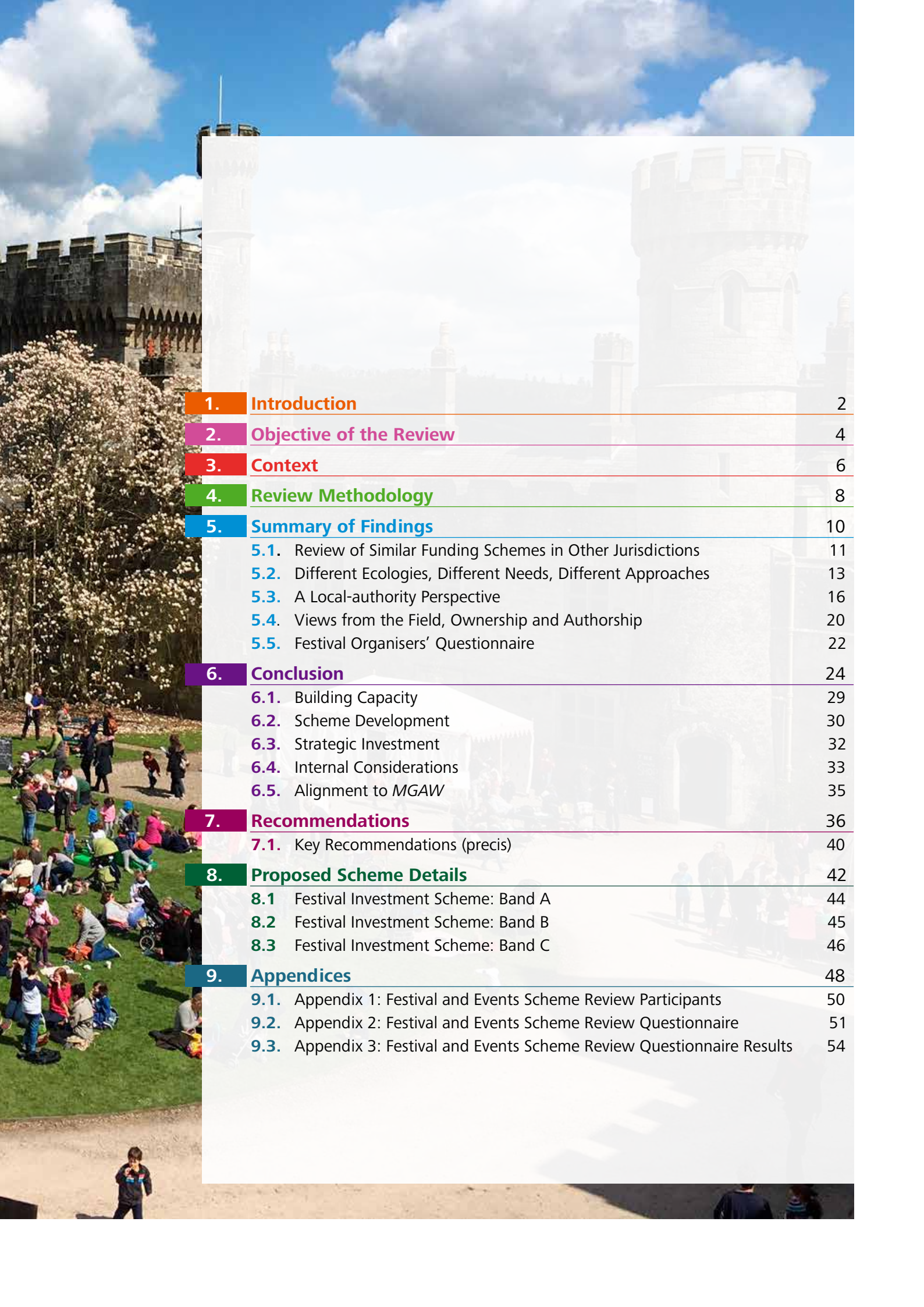
Festivals and Events Scheme Review 2017



David Teevan & Karl Wallace



Towers and Tales, Lismore Story Festival, 2016, Festival Hub Photographer Towers and Tales



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1.



Towers and Tales, Lismore Story Festival, 2016, Wobbly Circus Photographer Sarah Kim-Watchorn

Introduction

The Arts Council supports artists' practice and provides opportunities for the public to engage with the arts. *Making Great Art Work (MGAW)*, the Arts Council's strategy for 2016–25, establishes the coordinates by which the organisation will lead the development of the arts. The *Making Great Art Work Three-year Plan, 2017–2019* is the first step in implementing the ambition articulated in *MGAW*.

Since soon after its establishment in 1951, the Arts Council has been funding festivals, recognising them as key platforms for the presentation and experiencing of art. Initially these festivals were single-artform-focused like Wexford Festival of Opera (est. 1951) and Dublin Theatre Festival (est. 1957). During the 1970s there was an increase in the number of arts-focused festivals starting up around the country, in particular the emergence of multidisciplinary arts festivals like Kilkenny Arts Week (est. 1974) and Galway Arts Festival (est. 1978). In the intervening years the number of festivals both multidisciplinary and single artform has grown considerably, with new events starting up around the country on an annual basis.

The Arts Council demonstrates its commitment to festivals through annual support to multidisciplinary (MDA) and single-artform festivals of strategic significance, and to small festivals through the Festivals and Events Scheme. This commitment is evidenced by the €3,083,202 distributed (in 2017) to MDA festivals through annual grants and the Festivals and Events Scheme, which supports a varied artform and geographical mix of smaller festivals across the country.

The genesis of the scheme dates to 2003 with the Arts Council and Wicklow and Cork county councils launching a pilot programme to address the long-term needs of small festivals, and identifying the ways to best support their progression.¹

In 2004 the Arts Council established the Small Festival Scheme, which, following a review in 2008, developed into the Festivals and Events Scheme (FES), providing grant support to a panoply of events, short seasonal programmes and small festivals. The scheme operates three strands over two application periods: strand 1 for under €10,000, strand 2 for between €10,000–20,000, and strand 3 for above €20,000.

The scheme has to date funded 2,015 festival programmes and events, totalling €10,637,318 in support.² The average grant over the life of the scheme is €5,231.56. Grants are allocated across fourteen artform areas and to each of the twenty-six counties in the Republic of Ireland, providing broad and significant arts provision, of which there is a striking variety of scale, model and type of practice. Traditionally, there has been two funding rounds per annum: spring and autumn.³

In the *Making Great Art Work Three-year Plan, 2017–2019*, the Arts Council has made a commitment to increasing its investment in small festivals in recognition of their capacity to 'support greater participation in arts throughout the country'.⁴

This review has been undertaken in an attempt to establish an understanding of the contribution, scale and scope of small festivals, as well as consider their role in a broader festival ecology, with a view to revising the current funding scheme so that it better responds to the needs of the festivals while at the same time ensuring that this vital platform, which plays such an important role in the lives of artists and local communities, delivers on the objectives of *MGAW*.

1 Doireann Ní Bhriain, Susan Coughlan and Maureen Kennelly, *Support for Small Festivals* (report, 2003).

2 Arts Council Small Festival Funding Statistics, 2004–17.

3 Artforms include: Multidisciplinary Arts, Traditional Arts, Music, Literature, Film, Circus, Visual Arts, Opera, Dance, Theatre, Architecture, Street & Spectacle, YPCE, Arts Participation.

4 Arts Council, *Making Great Art Work Three-year Plan, 2017–2019*, p. 7.

2.



Cairde, Sligo Arts Festival, Parkfest, 2018 Photographer Peter Martin

Objective of the Review

- Enhance the Arts Council's understanding of the culture and impact of arts-led festivals and events;
- Review the Arts Council supports for festivals and events within the overall context of *MGAW* implementation;
- Discuss the potential of festivals and events to realise the strategic goals and objectives of *MGAW*;
- Understand how festivals and events can build their capacity;
- Make recommendations as to how the current FES could be improved so as to better support the festivals in their work with artists and the public while at the same time ensuring that the objectives outlined in *MGAW* are achieved.

3.



Artist Sáerlaith Molloy performing at K-Fest, County Kerry, June 2018 Photographer David Hegarty

Context

Many different motivations contribute to the establishment and maintenance of festivals. These include:

- Artists wishing to create a platform for their work with a view to reaching a specific community of interest or engaging with their local community;
- Members of a local community wishing to share their appreciation of art and animate their community;
- Local-authority arts-office initiatives to establish arts festivals as part of their strategic planning for the county;
- Individuals or groups who wish to raise the profile of a town to attract visitors.

Within the FES scheme (but not particular to it) there is a range of organisational models. These include:

- Festivals with the capacity to source funding from local government, state agencies and corporate sponsorship, run by professional arts managers and artists, presenting ambitious programmes in partnership with other arts or cultural agencies;
- Two and three-day events, run by volunteers, that present work by local artists alongside that of established Irish artists;
- Small-scale events and festivals established by artists that showcase particular artforms and artists, who are frequently in the early phases of their practice;
- Arts or community organisations that operate a festival as part of their year-round programme of activities;
- Venues that use festivals as a platform to enhance audience development with a concentrated set of activities.

Largely, the content of festivals and events common to the scheme are either:

Single artform

often focused on attracting either industry or brand-loyal audiences;

Multidisciplinary (MDA)

festivals that introduce a wide range of arts activity to a broad audience.

The full spectrum of festivals encompass a broad menu of arts activity taking place on islands, at crossroads, in villages, in towns and in cities.

The festival ecology is complex: it is inhabited by artists from every artform and many who work across artforms, and it is interwoven with the histories and current identities of villages, towns and communities across the country. Each festival is born from a desire to create opportunity, whether for a community, locality, artists or artform. There is a high level of voluntary work across festival planning and delivery; invariably, there is a need for temporary resources and a myriad of stakeholders to negotiate.

The proposed revisions to the FES, which are the outcome of this review, are based on examination of this complex ecology and seek to respond to the needs of festival organisations while at the same time aligning the scheme with the policy priorities as outlined in *MGAW*.

4.



Robert Ballagh discussing his work at the *Coming Home* exhibition, Skibbereen Arts Festival, 2018 Photographer Brendan Lyons

Review Methodology

The FES review was a consultative process undertaken between November 2016 and April 2017. The review team established the following methodology:

Consultation

- Review similar funding schemes in other jurisdictions of similar scale;
- Consult with organisers from a cross section of festivals – i.e. differentiated by scale and geographical locations;
- Consult with applicants of the Festivals and Events Scheme;
- Consult with local-authority arts officers (AO);
- Consult with Festivals and Events panel members;
- Consult with arts and senior managers at the Arts Council of Ireland.

Methodology

- Online research, email correspondence and Skype interviews with officers in other arts councils (Wales, New Zealand, Scotland, Northern Ireland);
- Round-table discussion with festival organisers, local-authority arts officers, and panel members (Round 2 FES);
- Sectoral questionnaire sent to 569 festivals that applied for funding between 2014 and 2017;
- In-house questionnaire and round-table discussion with arts managers/heads of team at the Arts Council;
- One-to-one interviews with arts managers, arts teams and members of the Strategic Development Team at the Arts Council.

5.



The Walls Have Ears, Seán MacErlaine and Jennifer Walshe at Cairde, Sligo Arts Festival, 2018 Photographer Colin Gillen

Summary of Findings

Below are the findings of the review team from the areas identified in the methodology.

5.1. Review of Similar Funding Schemes in Other Jurisdictions

As part of the FES review, a detailed study of the approach to funding festivals in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and New Zealand was undertaken. This included online research, email correspondence and a number of Skype interviews.⁵ This section details the key findings from this research.

Wales

The Arts Council of Wales (ACW) established a band structure for festivals in 2012, which was revised in 2015 to respond to feedback received during the first three years of the scheme. Those applying for under £5,000 apply under a general small-scale arts-initiative funding programme that is not specific to festivals. These are evaluated by the development team.

Larger festival organisations apply under one of four bands:

- Band 1:** up to £25,000 (20–25 festivals funded);
- Band 2:** up to £40,000 (8–15 festivals funded);
- Band 3:** up to £60,000 (4–8 festivals funded);
- Band 4:** up to £80,000 (3–5 festivals funded).

These are evaluated by the festival officer with three Arts Council officers and an external monitor.

The objective of the banding is to give clarity to the sector about the expectations the Arts Council has for festivals of different scale. In particular it:

- Aims to benchmark where a festival in receipt of funding should be;
- Provides the Arts Council with a rationale for decisions.

Each festival applying for the programme has to first consult with the festival team and agree with it regarding which band is most appropriate. However, it is noted that though a festival might be directed to apply for one band, it may upon evaluation be deemed more suitable for a lower band.

The ACW website includes a development-plan template that must be completed by every festival organisation applying for funding above a certain band level. According to feedback received, this has made the process of evaluation more effective as it ensures that each festival provides a full suite of information. The development plans are seen as working documents that are to be updated each year. It is worth noting that the festival organisations have been very positive about the benefits to them of completing the development plans.

⁵ Interviews with Carys Wynne-Morgan (Arts Council of Wales), Lorna Duguid (Creative Scotland) and Sonya Whitefield (Arts Council of Northern Ireland), and correspondence with Briar Monro (Creative New Zealand | Toi Aotearoa).

Scotland

In Scotland smaller festivals are encouraged to apply to their local authority for funding, as local authorities are seen as the primary beneficiary of these events. Larger festivals apply under Open Project Funding (OPF) that has the following categories, which are open year round:

Up to £15,000
(applicant waits eight weeks for a decision);

£15,000–£100,000
(applicant waits twelve weeks for a decision);

£100,000–£150,000
(requires Creative Scotland agreement to apply;
applicant waits twelve weeks for a decision).

Of interest to the FES review is the demand that each organisation must demonstrate clearly its understanding and approach towards:

- Artistic excellence:
demonstrate a clear artistic policy;
- Audience development:
have an audience-development strategy;
- Management:
have a project-management plan;
- Finances:
have clear budgets and a management accounts system.

The OPF is focused on programming, not core organisation costs. The OPF is one-year funding. Creative Scotland also offers three-year funding under the Regularly Funded Organisations scheme (RFO). Neither funding programme is recurring. Creative Scotland is of the opinion that establishing this with RFO and OPF clients has allowed for new voices to break through.

The rolling application date has worked for festivals. They can apply when they have the programme and with plenty of time for notification, rather than being caught in a biannual funding cycle.

Northern Ireland

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) also asks its festival-client organisations to respond to four main areas (similar to those used by Creative Scotland). When evaluating the submissions, different weighting is assigned as follows:

Artistic practice (scored out of 10);

Public benefit (scored out of 15);

Financial viability (scored out of 7);

Project management (scored out of 5).

The assessment by ACNI also has two steps. Having undergone the evaluation based on these four criteria, the application is then evaluated in terms of how well it fits with the portfolio of funded organisations. In particular, the ACNI looks at the bigger picture across the country in terms of spatial distribution and artform provision and development. These are set out below:

- Range of artforms:
ACNI wants to support a range of artforms and a diversity of artistic practices;
- Geographical spread:
ACNI will take into account the need to support work by a range of funded organisations across the whole of Northern Ireland;
- Size and type:
ACNI wants to invest in an appropriate mix of sizes and types of organisation;
- Risk:
ACNI will take into account the level of financial risk to investment across the annual-funding programme.

New Zealand

Creative New Zealand (CNZ) also uses a banding structure for funding festivals:

Creative Communities Scheme –
up to \$2,000 (€1,300);

Quick Response Grant –
up to \$7,500 (€5,000);

Arts Grant –
up to \$65,000 (€45,000).

CNZ uses four frames to get a clear picture of the organisation's vision and management capacity:

- What? – the artistic ambition;
- How? – the project management;
- Who? – the artists and management team;
- How much? – the budget.

Engagement with the public is not a primary focus for CNZ, but instead appears under four strategic outcomes from which the applicant need only select one as a priority:

- New Zealanders participate in the arts;
- High-quality New Zealand art is developed;
- New Zealanders experience high-quality arts;
- New Zealand arts gain international success.

5.2.

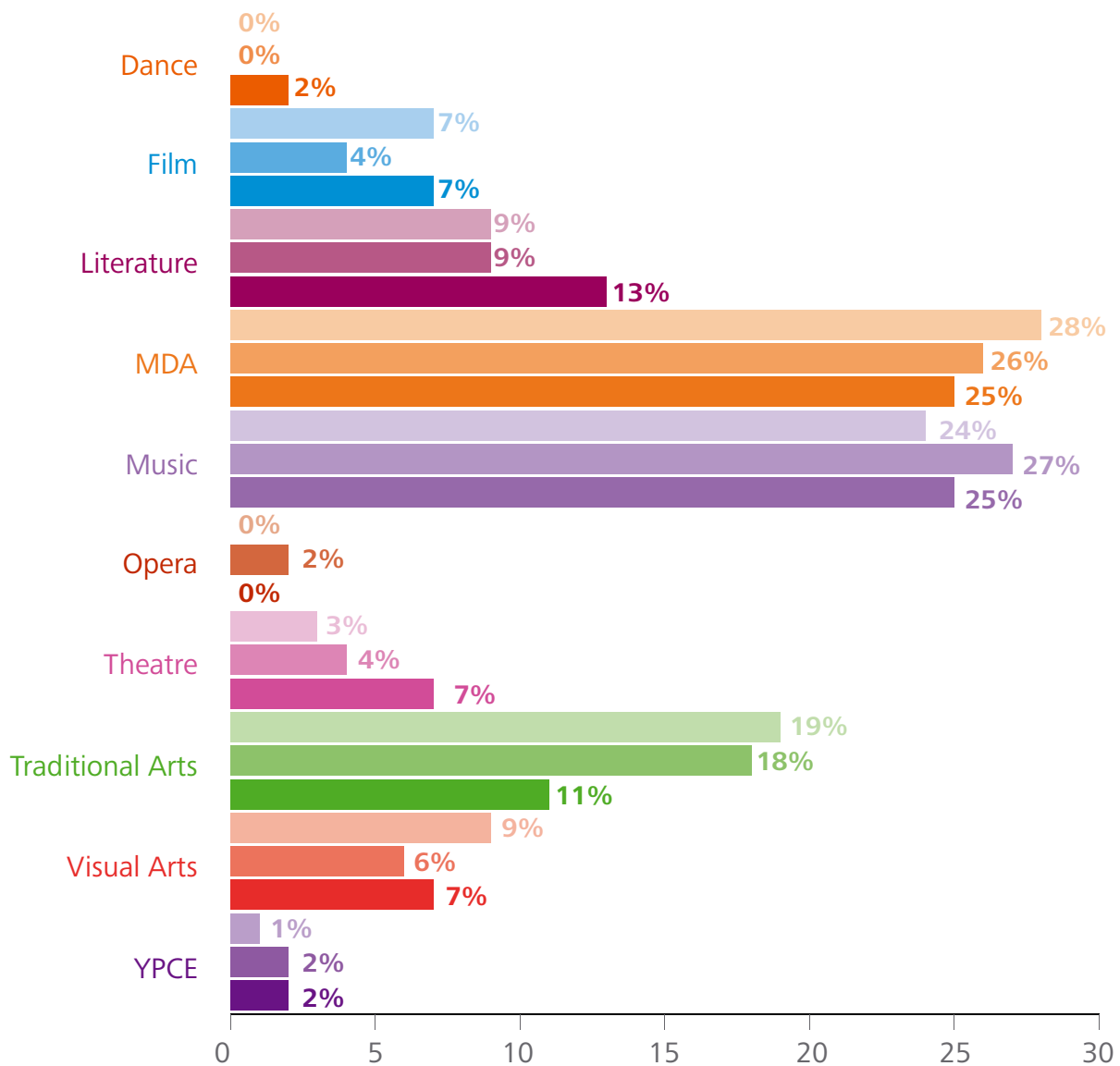
Different Ecologies, Different Needs, Different Approaches

The arts teams in the Arts Council responsible for the assessment and stewardship of schemes reflect the diversity of the arts sector across Ireland. These teams are split into artform (dance, music, etc.), platforms (such as venues and festivals) and those areas of specific strategic interest, such as Young People, Children & Education, Local Arts and Arts Participation. The Festivals and Events Scheme is a 'cross artform' assessment scheme, with festival applications often representing a varied diet of different content, and therefore each team makes an assessment of applications in its specialist area. The current scheme outlines in its guidelines two key priorities: first, general festival priorities; second, individual artform priorities that are intended to support strategic development within a particular sector. For example, under 'Theatre', FES prioritises festivals that are seeking 'to push the boundaries of theatre in terms of experimentation and innovation', while in the visual arts, festivals are seen as a platform to enable enhanced connection with community and must 'clearly show an understanding of how to mediate the visual arts to people with a non-specialist knowledge of the artform'.⁶

The scheme assessment changed in 2014 to make provision for these different artform-assessment approaches, with each arts team assessing its own specialised area. This approach is considered to be a positive development amongst Arts Managers (AM) as they ensure that each application is assessed with rigour and consideration for the artform/specialism.

There was agreement amongst AM that festivals could be broadly defined as fitting into two categories: those that contribute to artform development and increase the visibility of the art, and those organisations that create valuable work in their communities by developing place making and building local audiences. The two are not mutually exclusive, with recognition of some successful hybrid models.

Percentage of Festival & Event Scheme budget allocated by artform 2014 / 2015 / 2016



Festivals are collectively considered to play a vital role in the wider arts ecology, and there is general agreement that the Arts Council does not currently invest sufficient money in this scheme to develop festivals in a way that is fully strategic. There is also cognisance regarding the complexity of the scheme; for example, it is difficult to assess a single-artform festival against that of a multi-disciplinary festival, each having different approaches and priorities.

The single most pertinent issue arising from the AM consultation concerned the future relationship between the Arts Council and the smaller festivals. Should the Arts Council be playing a leading role, or a leadership role, in festival development at a local level, and can it do this without getting involved in micromanaging interventions? The FES programme makes just under 150 funding decisions per year for relatively small amounts of money, and these organisations in and of themselves having a modest footprint, but when looked at collectively these organisations and their work make a coherent picture and contribute significantly to the larger arts ecology. In proposing changes to the current scheme there was general consensus that any change must make a tangible difference and not be just 'tokenistic'.

It was argued by some of the AM that the current scheme is reactive to proposals rather than strategic, the stranding system currently in place is restrictive (in that it doesn't allow for growth), and that there is little clarity around its strategic intention. Another view was that the scheme invests lots of 'very small pots of money' into festivals, and it was queried whether this was 'good use of Arts Council expertise and resources as an arts-development agency'. Investing sufficient resources to develop festivals in a way that is meaningful to certain types of artforms would allow a strategic approach and would support those festivals so as to build further capacity.

There is value in this perspective, which reflects the stance taken by Creative Scotland which has delegated the responsibility of funding small festivals to the local authorities, thereby enabling its own agency to concentrate on larger festival programmes. However, this view was not universally supported as it was acknowledged that small festivals receiving small grants in the scheme play a significant role in the wider artform ecology and development. This was echoed by all the local-authority arts officers interviewed (see section 5.3), who emphasised the critical role small festivals play in their counties and cities, and the importance of Arts Council funding to their survival and development.

The 'catch all' nature of the scheme was also referenced. An AM outlined that over time the programme has reacted to sectoral changes, developing from the Small Festival Scheme to the Festivals and Events Scheme to accommodate those projects that perhaps don't 'easily fit' but are an important part of the arts ecology. Should the scheme address festivals only as a strategic measure?

5.3. A Local-authority Perspective

The Festivals and Events Scheme has been one of the most important Arts Council schemes for the development of the arts, throughout the country. It has helped festivals develop and engage in high quality work.

Melanie Scott, Local-authority Arts Officer,
County Tipperary

Local-authority arts officers who contributed to the review were unanimous in their view that the FES has made a huge difference to festivals in Ireland, and that its **developmental value outstrips its monetary value**. They recognised the complexity of the festival ecology and suggested that a revised framework needed to be created that is flexible, has the capacity to support festival development, and has a more strategic approach.

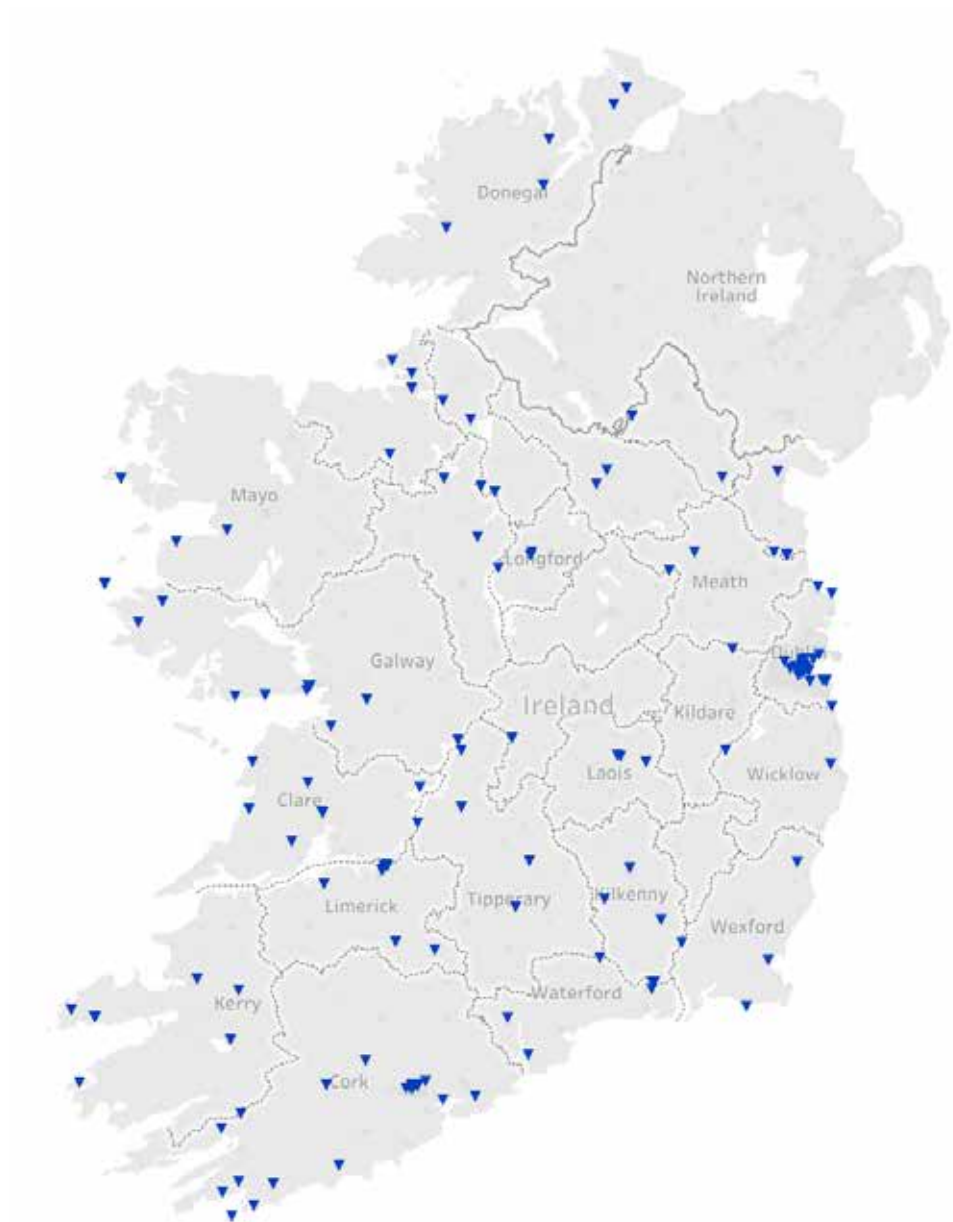
The primary function for the local arts offices was identified as improving the quality of life in their region. Festivals are seen not only as being central to that ambition but as a vital component in the arts provision for each locality. Although the approach to festivals can differ from one local-authority area to the next, there were many agreed reasons as to why arts officers considered festivals as an important part of their local arts infrastructure. These included the following:

- Festivals engender a high level of ownership and engagement with the local community;
- Festival programmes offer varied, diverse methods of public engagement with the arts;
- Festivals offer the capacity to be experimental (both for the artist and, importantly, the audience);
- Festivals help to provide arts infrastructure in areas where there is none;
- Festivals are a visible offering of the cultural activities happening locally.

Several initiatives being led by arts offices were shared as part of the discussion, which provided evidence of local authorities' willingness to invest strategically in festival development in order to provide a rich arts engagement. Galway Arts Office cites Galway as the 'City of Festivals', with €105,800 in direct grants from the local authority going to eleven single artform and MDA festivals as part of its annual calendar. This figure represents 27.4% of the total €385,000 arts-office budget allocation.⁷ Festivals in Galway have been seen as a successful mechanism for engaging audiences and in engendering a sense of place-making and community in the city and its environs. This is evidenced by the recent development of a Levantine Festival, celebrating ethnicity and the Middle Eastern diaspora making a home for itself in Galway city. Festivals are considered (in this instance) as celebrating a community through the arts. In the run-up to Galway

⁷ Galway City Arts Grant Awards (Organisations) Budget 2016–17, <http://www.galwaycity.ie/pobal-cultur/arts-office-information>.

The geographic spread of festivals funded under FES in 2017





2020 (as articulated in the city's local arts plan), Galway City Council 'supports participation in the arts and celebrates diversity'. Festivals are identified as one of the delivery mechanisms for this mission.

In County Tipperary the arts officer has recently launched a festival strategy that outlines an investment plan for festivals across the county. The objective of the plan is to ensure that there are platforms for a broad spectrum of arts practices and a diversity of arts experiences available to the public. The blueprint identifies specific requirements, such as there being at least one large destination festival focused on visitors and overnighting attenders, local festivals that celebrate localism and place-making, and smaller community-focused festivals. The arts officer also provides resource support (a part-time arts manager) to three volunteer-run community festivals to support them with (amongst other things) preparing applications and planning.

The arts offices in County Cork, Cork city and County Kerry have, through the Arts Council's *A Framework for Collaboration Agreement*, undertaken mentoring and a capacity-building programme for six festivals during 2017.⁸ The festivals, which represent a mixture of scale, artform and experience, are mentored by three arts professionals.⁹

Dublin City Arts Office has developed a Local Arts Festival Toolkit that is available through its website, in addition to supporting a significant mix of festivals, some jointly supported with the Arts Council and some led and funded by Dublin City Council.

On comparing models during the discussion, the difference between the approach to resourcing festivals in rural and metropolitan arts-officer areas was striking. For those living rurally, the relative isolation of those organising festivals was cited as problematic and a factor

when it came to programming. This, together with a lack of access to vibrant new work and a paucity of local arts infrastructure, was seen as one of the contributing factors that might lead to a stagnation of creative approaches. Time commitment and cost (in particular) were also considered barriers to visiting other festivals; visits were considered important to support festival organisers in building their programme capacity and developing new ideas and approaches for their festivals. In an urban setting, diversity of audiences, promotion, visibility and competition for resources were identified as contributing barriers. MDA festivals were cited as 'being important catalysts for the development of arts infrastructure in an area'. The development in Galway of a number of festivals (Film Fleadh, Cuiart, Babaro, Galway Theatre Festival and Galway Fringe), as well as the Town Hall and Black Box, owe much to the Galway International Arts Festival.

There was general agreement that the structure of the current scheme and its application process could be improved, and it was suggested that the Arts Council might consider implementing a structure in its application phase that could support the development needs of festival organisers. The current stranding structure of the scheme was seen as potentially creating a series of barriers rather than a framework that supported festivals to build capacity or develop.

There was consensus that whilst arts officers had a greater capacity for supporting some of the smaller festivals that would be unlikely to survive at the national funding level, they rejected the idea that a festival would always first receive local funding before moving on to Arts Council funding. They argued that, on occasion, there might be festivals that are of strategic importance to national artform development that could be funded by the Arts Council, and would not be funded by the arts offices.

⁸ The festivals selected for this programme: K-Fest and Listowel Writers' Week in County Kerry, Mid May Arts Festival in Midleton, County Cork, Mallow Arts Festival in County Cork, Cork Folk Festival and Cork Puppet Festival, both in Cork city.

⁹ The mentors for this programme are Declan McLoughlan, Una Carmody and Philip King.

← Diego Laverde Rojas (Colombia), Achill International Harp Festival, October 2017 Photographer Marianne Mangan

↓ The Walls Have Ears, Phil Minton performing at Cairde, Sligo Arts Festival, 2017 Photographer Colin Gillen

Emerging artform-led festivals (as one example) would not always be deemed to fulfil the objectives of local-authority arts planning and provision, and may not be considered a priority for funding. Without the support of the Arts Council to provide for new and germinating artform festivals, a vital part of the festival and artform ecology could be endangered.

There was full acknowledgement that there was a scarcity of information regarding the national picture of festivals supported across the country. Fáilte Ireland was cited as the other significant stakeholder in the support and development of festivals across Ireland. Whilst Fáilte Ireland's remit extends beyond arts festivals and focuses on support of marketing and promotion, it was suggested that a joined-up approach between the Arts Council, the local authorities and Fáilte Ireland could be explored.

Despite each agency having its own strategic priorities, there was a positive response to the arts officers and the Arts Council encouraging the development and growth of festivals in a joint initiative. Opportunities for networking, training, professional development and capacity building were suggested as potentially sitting within 'A Framework for Collaboration Agreement' between the Arts Council and the County and City Management Association. The Arts Council Residency Schemes were discussed as a good model for supporting artists or curators in making/creating work to strengthen the programming capacity of festivals.

Possible duplication of funding for festivals might need further investigation. Arts-officer's arts programmes funded by the Arts Council (as distinct from arts-officer's own arts budgets) do provide support to a number of festivals, and in some cases these festivals might also be supported through FES. Clarity about the ways in which festivals are supported (if supported through these two schemes) requires resolution to avoid duplication of public funds for the same purpose. On further investigation, forty-eight arts-officers Arts Council-funded programmes include festivals, of which ten require further research. It is recommended that further collaboration between the arts officers and the festivals-and-events teams takes place to make this position clear.

However, given the importance expressed during the discussion about festivals and their place in each local arts plan, it was agreed that festival applicants to a reimagined Festivals and Events Scheme should have some recognition of local-authority arts plans or endorsement from arts officers.



5.4.

Views from the Field, Ownership as Authorship

Festival directors, programmers and managers that were consulted reflected a broad range of artform practices and geographical spread. All attendees to the round-table discussion had good working knowledge of the Festivals and Events Scheme, and reflected various levels of support (Strands 1–3).

Festivals in attendance (mainly small organisations running 3–4-day annual events) considered themselves development organisations engaged in work within their communities throughout the year or making work with artists over a period of time in advance of the festival. Out-of-festival-period activities were considered an opportunity to build audiences, keep a festival brand visible, and provide access to year-round arts activity to communities that would otherwise not have access to the arts. This they understood to be a key component of their mission, and it added to the strength of the festival when it came around. Of the 132 festivals that replied to the online questionnaire, nearly half of the respondents (47.7%) said that their organisation was involved in activities in the local community during the year. The planning and logistic cycle for managing and preparing a festival was also discussed: engaging locally and securing permissions to work in public spaces is an essential function, with significant lead-in times; sometimes this work would take at least twelve months to prepare.

There was some frustration with the current iteration of the FES in that it is a non-recurring scheme, when the festivals were clear that they were (mostly) recurring and annual by nature. Despite a commitment of festival organisations to review their progress and development year on year, the scheme did not fully allow their history and track record to be referenced, but instead looked at them anew each time they applied. Planning was a key issue, with the current biannual-scheme deadlines suiting some festivals better than others, with funding results often announced four to six weeks before some festivals' starting dates. The stranding structure currently

in place was considered confusing, and there was a lack of clarity about how a festival would migrate from one strand to another. An opportunity to rethink this and create a process that might aid planning and provide clarity around the Arts Council priorities was welcomed. Multi-annual funding was cited as an excellent idea for providing long-term planning opportunities and stemming the unpredictability of funding. A third of all questionnaire respondents also agreed with this, making it the most popular answer when looking at potential scheme improvements. A rolling application process was also recommended by the discussion group.

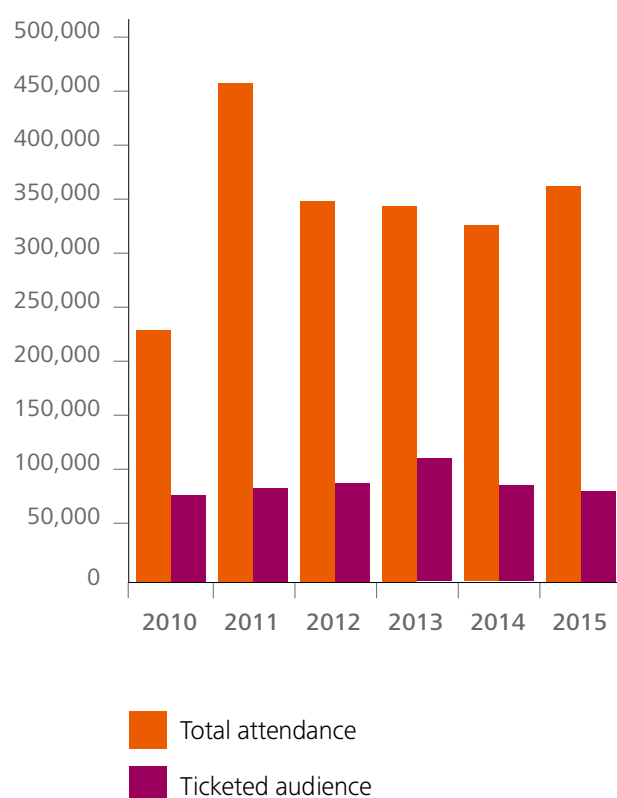
There was consensus that there was significant ownership of festivals by their communities, which in turn engendered a sense of local pride. The ownership was described as a 'collective authorship', where the community often makes and delivers a festival. The importance of this could not be underestimated, and it formed a significant portion of the discussion.

Regardless of the location of a festival, it was agreed that unique events take place that would not normally happen outside the context of a festival, and, as such, they had a very special place in the provision of arts throughout the country.

Most festivals represented had a commitment to including at least some free events. It was felt that this was vital for making connections with members of the wider community who either could not afford, or were not in the habit of paying, to attend arts events. It was a strongly held view that the inclusion of free events played a key part in audience engagement and in building new audiences for the arts. This opinion was corroborated by the festivals that completed the questionnaire, with 87 per cent saying that they offered some part of their programme free to the public.

Building capacity was outlined as a way for festivals to improve their programming, skills and knowledge, and to reach into their communities. Types of capacity building included:

Total festival attendance v/s ticketed (paid) audience numbers¹⁰



- Having a dedicated national arts-festival resource organisation;
- Marketing and fundraising training;
- Strategic planning workshops;
- Partnership development (other festivals, local stakeholders, communities of interest);
- Sponsorship development;
- Multi-agency initiatives (Creative Ireland, Business 2 Arts, Local Enterprise Offices, embassies for international work);
- Research (universities and colleges assisting through particular courses);
- Providing networking events (it was noted that the round-table discussion had provided huge benefit through discussing topics relevant to small festivals).

This is further corroborated by the festivals' questionnaire, where 84 per cent of the respondents agreed with the bulleted points above.

While funding was considered of paramount importance, there was a general consensus that being awarded an Arts Council grant was a significant endorsement highly prized by festivals. There was generally a desire expressed for greater dialogue with the Arts Council staff, which would allow festivals to better negotiate the application process and understand requirements. This was also the top answer in the festival questionnaire, with 23 per cent of respondents articulating that more dialogue with the Arts Council would allow organisations to plan better.

While recognising the great disparity of types of festivals and their different needs, it was felt that in revising the FES the Arts Council could create a scheme that is supportive of the needs of organisations, be they run by arts professionals or voluntary committees. An opportunity for festival organisers to apply for Arts Council Travel & Training Awards was suggested as one way to assist festivals build capacity in addition to changing FES.

¹⁰ FES Scheme report statistics 2010–2015.

5.5. Festival Organisers' Questionnaire

In addition to the round-table discussion, a questionnaire was distributed to festival organisations that had applied to the Festivals and Events Scheme in the previous three years (applicants from 2014–17).

Total invited to take part in the survey: 569;

Total number of respondents: 260;

Respondent rate: 46 per cent.

Over half of the respondents (50.8 per cent) received a grant from the Arts Council to support their most recent festival, with the remainder being unsuccessful applicants between 2014–17. From the total of those that completed the survey, 30 per cent operate a festival turnover under €50,000, and 57 per cent under €20,000. Benefits-in-kind (BIK) represent a significant contribution to festival costs, with 72 per cent of respondents in receipt of under €20,000 support. Only 4 per cent of those surveyed recorded BIK as €100,000+.

As with the round-table discussion, just under half of those surveyed (47 per cent) provided year-round activity. This ranged from classes to workshops, training, recitals, readings and film screenings. The majority of festivals that offered free activity did so to provide community access, while providing access to those from low-income backgrounds, building audiences and developing tourism were also advanced as reasons for free activities.

The vast majority of festivals (87 per cent) offered free activities. A few of the festivals operated 'pay what you can' models so as to test the consumer value of the work on offer. On balance, the percentage of programme offered by festivals that is free and that where an entry fee is charged is approximately fifty/fifty.

A cross section of audiences are represented at FES-funded festivals. Although the festival respondents did not provide granular detail – such as individual marketing groups or the socio-economic backgrounds of their visitors – they did outline that a third of attenders were

local and within a catchment area of forty kilometres. A third are from Ireland but outside the forty-kilometres catchment area, and the remaining third are from overseas. Whilst this gives a good 'snapshot' of general festival audiences, some small festivals will attract a higher percentage of overseas visitors, and some will be made up mainly of local audiences and customers.

The breakdown of festival management can be divided into two main areas: paid services and services offered as benefits-in-kind. Of the paid services listed, part-time staff make up the majority of those organising festivals, with contracts for services also offered and some full-time roles. From the BIK services, volunteers make up half of this group; in fact, volunteers form the largest constituent in the survey, representing just under a quarter of all the roles outlined. From management to general festival operations, volunteers provide significant support. Whilst the survey reveals that festivals are providing 50 per cent of the roles on offer through paid employment, it is important to note that the voluntary sector plays a vital role in ensuring that festivals continue to function.

Capacity building (as identified above) is a particular requirement for festivals. In the survey responses, fund-raising, marketing supports, strategic planning, networking and local-authority resources all score highly as ways to build further capacity and support development. The need for these supports is further evidenced by only 25 per cent of festivals having business or strategic plans, just 35 per cent with financial and audience-development plans, and only 50 per cent with a marketing and PR strategy. The majority of festivals have no artistic policy, although, reassuringly, 80 per cent do have an appropriate mission statement. Whilst small festivals might demonstrate less strategic planning, they are cognisant of what they require to grow the capacity to professionalise.

↓ Joe Caslin (France), for The Waterford Walls International Street Arts Festival, August 2018 Photographer The Walls Project

Identified Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities (SWOT)

Where festivals are confidently able to articulate their current successes is with regard to the impact on their 'communities' ('community' here is defined as either community of interest or geographical community). These include introducing professional arts into rural areas, developing artforms, supporting emerging and young artists, creating a platform for Irish-language arts, facilitating exposure to international arts, initiating art-form collaborations, developing a sense of place within a community, and animating local spaces.

In asking festivals to identify their strengths, much of the successes listed above are repeated, along with community cohesion, development of the local arts infrastructure, and providing opportunities for experimentation. Festivals see themselves as being able to add benefit through the arts to their communities and to provide essential arts provision. Identified opportunities primarily focus on growth, such as professional development, attracting more visitors, and developing the local economy. Multi-annual funding is also seen by many of the respondents as an opportunity to extend a festival's planning cycle.

Current weaknesses are focused on lack of resources, finances and capacity. The most popular answers were 'understaffed', 'under-resourced' and 'voluntary committees being overstretched'.

Threats or risks identified are mainly around planning. These include concerns about the over-reliance of the festival on a few people, the unreliability of physical spaces available to host festival work, and the unpredictability of funding. There was also cognisance of the limit of ticket prices that can be charged for particular events, reiterating the requirement for subsidy and financial support for an artistic programme.

In relation to the improvements that could be made to the Festivals and Events Scheme, there was an overwhelming response about advance planning and improvement of information and communication. Multi-annual funding was cited as being the single most important improvement that could take place, with the second most popular response being the introduction of advanced deadlines so as to ensure that application deadlines and funding decisions are taken sooner so as to assist with more strategic planning. Funding clinics, more meetings with the Arts Council, and better communication were cited as important, along with more frequent funding rounds and the removal of the current FES strand system.



6.



Footsbarn Theatre Company, Cootehill Arts Festival Parade, August 2018 Photographer Laura Murray

Conclusion



In 2017 the Festivals and Event Scheme provided €1,209,002 to 155 organisations, with 289 applications considered. Since 2004 the scheme (in its various manifestations) has consistently proved highly competitive, with between 45–55 per cent of applicants receiving grants over its thirteen-year life cycle (depending on the year, volume and quality of applications).

The mean average grant (per year) increased from just under €3,000 in 2004–05 to just under €6,000 between 2006–15. Since 2016, the increased strategic investment in small festivals has seen this figure rise to just over €8,000. Over the lifetime of the scheme, 2,015 grants have been awarded, totalling €10,637,318.

The scheme has undoubtedly contributed to a rich and diverse festival ecology across the Republic of Ireland; every single county in the country has a festival or event that has been supported through the scheme. Consistently over the life of the FES there has been a broad geographical spread of applications and awards. There is a large proportion of festivals on the west coast of Ireland, and this is perhaps reflected in the volume of applications to the scheme. Dublin, Cork and Galway continue to be the counties making the most applications, with counties Clare, Kerry, Mayo and Donegal the second largest set of applicants. The artform mix is also well represented (Table 1), with music, traditional arts and multidisciplinary festivals representing the largest volume of applications and awards. Arts Participation, YPCE and Street Arts & Spectacle categories remain low because of their late introduction into the scheme.¹¹ There is a developmental issue to consider here, in that festivals are the test bed and lifeblood for the Street Arts & Spectacle, and key to their survival and growth.

¹¹ YPCE applications started in 2016, Street Arts & Spectacle applications started in 2011, Arts Participation applications started in 2017.

TABLE 1 | Festivals and Event Scheme 2004–17 by Artform

Artform	Total Awarded	No. of Applications	No. Funded	Success Rate
Music	€2,929,227	795	464	58.3%
Traditional Arts	€2,623,872	831	554	66.6%
Multidisciplinary	€2,432,565	979	413	42.0%
Literature	€764,179	340	186	54.7%
Film	€623,935	233	97	41.6%
Visual Arts	€413,320	142	59	49.0%
Theatre	€299,185	110	54	49.0%
Circus	€172,000	52	27	47.3%
Dance	€125,869	62	25	40.3%
Opera	€78,210	29	12	41.3%
YPCE*	€62,951	34	11	32.3%
Architecture	€54,400	23	14	60.8%
Street, Spectacle**	€49,200	45	12	26.6%
Arts Participation***	€8,405	23	2	8.6%

TABLE 2 | Applications for 5k and Under, 2013–17

Year	Total Applications	No. Requesting 5K or Under	Percentage
2013	161	87	54.0%
2014	136	75	55.1%
2015	132	61	46.2%
2016	107	42	39.3%
2017	155	35	22.6%

Arts Participation and YPCE are considered strategic priorities, and do much to engage communities and grow audiences. A consideration of their importance reflected through a reimagined scheme would be recommended. The scheme also has seen a gradual increase in the amount of grant requests, with a steady decline in applications for awards of €5,000 and under (Table 2).

Despite FES being highly competitive, festivals are incredibly resilient, sometimes committing to production when funding has not been awarded because often (as evidenced in previous chapters) festivals play a significant role in their communities and in celebrating place and identity; continuity would therefore appear to be essential. Between 2009–15,¹² festivals that were awarded grants through FES secured €23,380,577.61 in additional income from a myriad of sources (embassies, private sponsorship, Fáilte Ireland, local authorities, donations, etc.), with €7,089,713.47 of this from reported ticket sales. (It is important to note that this €23 million has been secured partly as a result of the scheme's investment.)

What at first may appear as a sound business model – with low overheads, high levels of participation and healthy box-office income – does not come without its 'downside'. The reality is that festivals exist in a fragile ecology, with volunteers and local communities playing a significant role in reducing costs through their investment of time and expertise, and ensuring that festivals operate due to significant levels of benefits-in-kind.

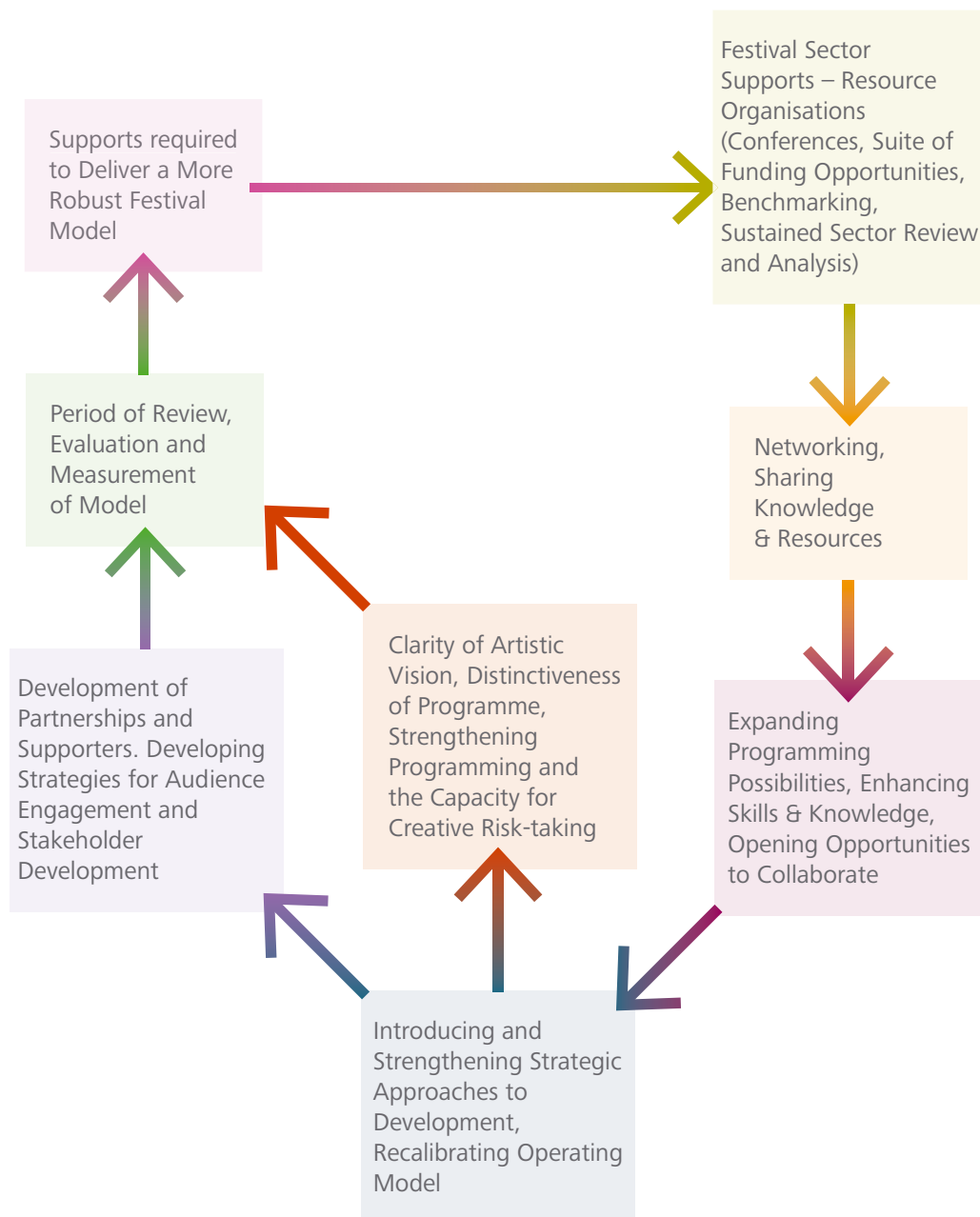
Whilst there are small festivals that operate with either full-time or part-time staff, the sector is heavily reliant on local communities and volunteers. This reliance on volunteering can be identified as both a strength and a potential weakness. One of its great benefits is strong links to the local community and the subsidy it provides.

Weaknesses include uncertain reliability and the lack of a skilled workforce in the arts. The current scheme asks applicants to provide information about their BIK, but a lot more work remains in order to identify the detail, as only then will there be a true picture of the proportion of subsidy that is offered in time/services, the reliance on the volunteer sector, and the tangible benefits that this brings. Communities are (as evidenced through survey and discussion) part subsidising festival platforms to ensure they take place. In a climate where the Arts Council is ever more vigilant about payments to artists, it is good to have more information about the stability of the foundations upon which festivals rest.

Since the inception of the scheme in 2004 there have been a number of reviews testing the pulse and effectiveness of the scheme. In almost all the reviews (including this one) there are consistent issues and challenges facing festivals.

12 2009–15 Internal Arts Council Festivals and Events Scheme (Other Income) statistics.

DIAGRAM 1 | Festival Model



6.1. Building Capacity

From 2002–03 the Arts Council and the local authorities in counties Wicklow and Cork ran a festival pilot programme. The primary challenges facing the festivals that took part were:

- Succession planning and strengthening governance;
- Capacity to think strategically and developmentally;
- Proper measurement of festival audiences and audience mapping;
- Risk-taking with regard to programming.¹³

In 2007 Martin Drury, strategic development director at the Arts Council, cited the need for developmental supports for festivals.¹⁴ These included:

- Improving the practical environment in which festivals take place (development of knowledge around VAT, insurance, health and safety);
- Developing internal partnership (further education, local-authority arts offices, venues);
- Developing external relationships (Association of Irish Festivals (AOIFE), Fáilte Ireland);
- Recognising that the sector had grown and required support.

In the 2012 Arts Council review, critical factors for festivals were around:

- Capacity and knowledge building;
- Artistic vision and purpose;
- Financial management;
- Arts knowledge.¹⁵

It would be fair to presuppose that FES has provided the capacity to deliver arts activity and arts opportunity through a festival platform across the country. This has been a widespread and very positive intervention – one that has developed a flourishing small-festivals infrastructure. It is also fair to suggest that festivals gestate over a longer period than perhaps other arts organisations, and therefore require time and investment to grow and develop their capacity. Some of these factors can be attributed to geographical location, lack of networking opportunities, scarcity of resources, and gaps in arts knowledge. Without capacity to improve on programming, audience development, partnership building and governance, festivals lack some of the more basic functions to improve the work they do and to develop in a way that will result in quality. It is important that festivals are provided with the opportunity to redress these gaps in provision, and this could in part be offered through a newly developed scheme.

While festivals have improved their evaluation and recording of audience and participation numbers (through the FES reporting structure), there still is a lack of detail on audience and certainly a lack of granular detail that would give festivals the capacity to build their programming around their audience intelligence. As evidenced by the festival questionnaire, the majority of festivals lack strategic documentation such as audience-development strategies and financial and business planning, which, again, would provide a suite of helpful supports. These, along with strengthening partnerships, are just a number of ways festivals can build capacity and address any deficits that currently threaten their existing operation. The lack of a dedicated arts-festival resource organisation may be a contributing factor to some of these deficits continuing in 2017.

13 Doireann Ní Bhriain, Susan Coughlan and Maureen Kennelly, 'Support for Small Festivals' (report, 2003).

14 Internal paper from Martin Drury (Strategic Development) to Una McCarthy, head of festivals, 13 August 2007.

15 2012 Report for Policy and Strategy Committee Meeting, 27 March 2012.



6.2. Scheme Development

There is evidence to support a redesign of the current scheme, which will not only help provide festivals with developmental capacity but also assist the Arts Council in making assessments with more informed knowledge. Other benefits include improving the standard and quality of applications.

Of all the models examined as part of the FES review, the Arts Council of Wales provides the most convincing argument and appropriate examples of how festivals can be effectively supported, not just financially but also in the way they seek to grow and build their capacity. It is important to note that when the FES scheme was introduced in 2002 it was to provide a 'progression route'.¹⁶ One of the recommendations of this review 'is to provide opportunity for growth, improved quality, capacity building and progress'.

It is important to note that 'progress' and 'growth' do not refer exclusively to the scale of operation and volume of programming. For some festivals this will be about achieving a higher quality of programming or increasing public engagement. It is therefore important that the festival-funding scheme allows that flexibility. With the ACW model there is a banding system, which outlines what stage of development a festival should be at to receive particular funding support. This currently differs from the FES stranding structure, where financial limits define which festivals receive support. This was repeatedly described by festivals during the period of consultation as being confusing. Currently, progression through the 'stranding' structure is based on financial merit rather than strategic considerations. Strand 3, for example, contains two previous annual-funded clients who were placed in the scheme as it was felt that this provided a more appropriate mechanism. Strand 3 applications are currently by invitation, but there is a lack of clarity around how a festival is invited to apply.

The ACW model provides much more clarity around its banding structure, in that each band outlines clearly what is expected of that festival in its governance, development and delivery. Smaller festivals have more 'light-touch' requirements, whilst in higher bands festivals are required to provide, amongst other things, a development plan (for which an online template is provided). This review recommends the introduction of a redesigned scheme based on the ACW model: a banded system with a clear strategic purpose and developmental supports for festivals. This will make it easier for applicants to navigate the application process and match their festival to a particular band, each band outlining priorities that reflect *MGAW* strategic considerations.

Building capacity is not just about increasing levels of funding to festivals. Funding increases should be measured and strategic, and in the case of festivals there is compelling evidence to suggest that development can also come from engaging in partnerships, co-commissioning/producing, strengthening governance, professionalising practice and longer-term planning.

Whilst the majority of festivals surveyed called for multi-annual funding agreements to replace the current scheme, there is a lack of evidence to suggest that providing three-year funding packages would have a discernible affect. This is not to discount the value of multi-annual funding where there is a credible argument for it – for example, for a festival that is working in partnership with organisations that have longer planning cycles or engaged in commissioned projects requiring long lead-in times. For most small festivals these are not regular features of their work practice. At present the current Festivals and Events Scheme allows organisations to apply for an increased award (if appropriate) on their grants from the previous year; however, multi-annual funding would not provide such flexibility. There is nevertheless a requirement to assist these festivals with their planning cycles.

¹⁶ Briefing note: Small Festivals Scheme, 2006.

← Ceschi performing at K-Fest, County Kerry, June 2018
Photographer David Hegarty

A constant criticism of the scheme is that it leaves little time between the announcement of a grant and the start of a festival. Currently, festivals apply in September for events taking place in January to June of the following year. This leaves a maximum planning cycle of six months, and in some cases just four weeks. If longer-term planning can provide festivals with the opportunity to lever additional income, programme further ahead, and develop more creative projects, this will not only benefit festival quality but also support the Arts Council in achieving some strategic aims. For example, a much earlier result could provide festivals with the time to seek partnerships with artists and other festivals, and perhaps look at creating work to assist in the development of particular artforms. However, this would require a forward commitment of funds in order to ensure that festivals could plan over a longer term. It would be the view of the review team that allowing festivals this important planning time is not just essential but mutually beneficial for organisations, artists and the public.

To echo the calls from the internal consultation, those from local authorities and the festivals themselves, there is real value and benefit to FES having a strategic approach. The scheme over time has attracted a number of different festivals and events, and there is a strong argument to be made that the current scheme does not currently invest strategically; instead it awards grants in reaction to proposals rather than setting out where particular areas of development might be more in alignment with the principles of *MGAW*. Essentially, for the scheme to be strategic it needs to prioritise funding commitments to those organisations that are best placed to deliver on *MGAW* objectives.

After thirteen years of investment through FES, consideration should be given to whether a small-festivals scheme is still suitable. Some of the festivals in Strand 2 of FES, for example, would not be considered small but, rather, as organisations that have the

opportunity to deliver more ambitious programmes and develop their operations. Financially investing in these festivals could provide them with the capacity to deliver on *MGAW* objectives.

At present there is evidence to suggest that festivals applying for small amounts of funding (under €5,000) are reducing year on year. This could be because of our increased investment over the life of the scheme or evidence of a smaller cohort of these types of festivals. Whilst these organisations are important to the lifeblood and ecology of small festivals, continuing to provide as much funding to this area is less strategic. AO did underline the value of these emerging festivals and their contribution to artform development, but at this scale it is less likely that these festivals will deliver as significantly on some of the *MGAW* priorities (engagement and audiences, for example) as some of their more established counterparts, which, with additional support, could achieve more. This does not mean a cessation of support to smaller and emerging festivals, but a financial commitment that might be smaller – i.e. more appropriate for their scale.

What is important is providing tools that can support the development of festivals at any stage of their life cycle. Through the newly augmented scheme, smaller festivals could have a lighter-touch investment and scrutiny. Those festivals seeking higher levels of funding should expect a more demanding process and would be required to submit strategic plans, track records and how details of how they match the priorities of the scheme. The ACW model has proven successful in allowing a festival to progress within a funding band, and has supported the development of its model of practice before advancing it to a higher level. Implementing a similar process would not only provide clarity for applicants and a greater level of intelligence gathering for the Arts Council but also arm the festival with the tools it would need to develop.

→ Sharon Carty with Peter Whelan and Ensemble Marsyas, St Peter's Church of Ireland, Drogheda Classical Music Series, September 2017
Photographer Frances Marshall



6.3. Strategic Investment

As evidenced in previous sections, festivals can play an integral part in developing local arts infrastructure as well as making a significant contribution to artform development and arts engagement. The purpose of a reworked FES scheme would be to provide an opportunity for festivals to develop these ambitions further and to be excellent, and to encourage the continuation of growth for those identified as strategically important. The current scheme falls short in supporting better planning cycles for festivals, clarity around festival development, and in investing in those that exemplify (in their practice) the best elements of the *MGAW* strategy.

A forward commitment of funding would allow festivals more time to plan and use Arts Council investment as a driver to lever other income. Providing an investment in festivals to build opportunities for public engagement and invest in more artist-led projects would also support the Arts Council's strategic objectives. These suggested strategic measures would go some way towards supporting festivals build capacity and avoid the current piecemeal approach to the distribution of funds.

A revised scheme could, like the Welsh model, provide a structure through the application process that provides festivals with the development tools they require to produce their activities. This would only be available under the newly augmented festivals scheme and would be tailored to festival organisations.

Rather than a mid-scale festival receiving annual funding, it might be strategically beneficial to apply to the new festival scheme that might better suit its development. When a festival is appropriately developed, the progression to annual funding could take place.

The scheme should have a broader consideration than just the distribution of funds if it is to strategically invest in festival clients.

In 2012 the Festivals and Events paper presented to the Policy and Strategy Committee outlined that:

Festivals could develop opportunities to commission, co-produce and present work with other festivals and venues or to otherwise proactively use their resources and assets to assist art form development.¹⁷

Nowhere is this more relevant than with Street Arts & Spectacle, which could not evolve without festivals providing a test bed for new work and an opportunity to build audiences. The incubation of work and artists could prove a fruitful model if formalised through an Arts Council scheme, and could help festivals build further capacity and support further investment in artist/artform development.

In addition to providing a funding mechanism for the delivery of festivals (such as FES), there is also the opportunity to introduce a residency model for festivals, which could be partnered with local authorities. Such a scheme could provide curatorial/artist residency for festivals and further develop local arts infrastructure, develop a partnership with the local authority, and share resources. This is recommended for consideration during phase 2 of a review of funding.

¹⁷ Policy and Strategy Committee meeting, 27 March 2012: Festivals.



6.4. Internal Considerations

The current assessment process and management of such is a complex one, with single-artform festivals assessed by artform teams, but with the festival team managing the relationship with the festivals and the final reporting phase. Essentially, two teams are managing the process of assessment and evaluation. Whilst there would be strong support for artform teams to continue to assess those applications from single-artform festivals, along with visits to see the work, it is recommended that a mechanism is introduced whereby the assessment team is satisfied that the festival delivered on the aims outlined in its application. At present the festival team signs off on final payments and reviews final reports, but this is perhaps without the knowledge of those teams that oversaw the assessment of the original application and festival visit. This would help give both the festivals and other artform teams a better working knowledge of those funded. The formal mechanism to achieve closer collaboration will be developed over the course of the first iteration of the newly designed scheme.

At present the current scheme allows for festivals to be funded up to €10,000 (Strand 1), €10,001–€20,000 (Strand 2) and €20,000+ (Strand 3). Applicants may only migrate to Strand 2 from Strand 1 if they have been awarded the maximum grant of €10,000 the previous year. There is no current pathway for festivals moving from Strand 2 to Strand 3. There are two funding rounds per year: one that allows for Strands 1, 2 and 3 applications, and a second allowing for just Strands 1 and 2.

The scoring of assessments by the executive would also require further examination. The current scheme provides both festival priorities and artform priorities, but the scoring system does not completely reflect these. In revising the scoring, it will be important to ensure that it responds to both artform and scheme priorities.

Members of the executive score only Strand 1 applications, with Strand 2 and 3 delegated to a peer panel for assessment. Whilst the panel would include arts-industry expertise, there is a compelling argument to remove this from the festival-assessment process. Festivals are in practice developmental organisations, and their gestation periods can be significantly longer than those of other artform areas. Festivals, due to the nature of working in the public realm and on multi-sites, have a large number of stakeholders, which can change depending on programming priorities. Therefore it is hard to assess festivals based on an application for just one year's activity. In order to make an informed judgement, assessors often require working knowledge of a festival's previous programmes and how it has continued to evolve. This is where advisors and the executive team would be better placed to make a fair and informed judgement. In recent consultation with members of the Festivals and Events Scheme Round 2 panel, they recommended the following considerations for improvements to the scheme:

- Reports on past festivals;
- Sample programming;
- Track record to inform feasibility;
- Recurring funding allowed for longer planning times and quicker decisions;
- Clear need for marketing and audience training;
- New scheme needed for festivals to commission work;
- Arts Council might consider commissioning a third-level study of festival audiences.



← Laoise McNamara from Achill participating in a harp workshop at Achill International Harp Festival in 2017
Photographer Marianne Mangan

↓ Pat McCabe leading out the cast at the end of *Bring me the Head of Dermot Healy* during Cootehill Arts Festival, August 2018
Photographer James Cosgrove

Many of these recommendations echo the requirements for more historical knowledge of festivals and the opportunity for festivals to build capacity.

At present the executive assesses applications for FES grants up to €10,000 and the panel from €10,000 to €40,000. Given the strategic intent of the Arts Council to fund festivals through this scheme on the basis of the quality of their programmes, both retrospective and prospective, and their alignment to the stated priorities of the scheme, consideration should be given to delegating the authority for decision-making, based on scoring, to the executive for awards limited to a set amount, with assessments over this limit going to Council for approval based on the scores of the teams.

In the ACW model, applicants are asked if they have spoken with the Arts Council prior to submitting their application. The process allows for ACW to best guide the applicant on the banding that would suit their development. There is no restriction on what funding stream an organisation can apply for, but the conversation with the Arts Manager is a way for festivals to receive more support and clarity throughout the process. This was considered to be an extremely important development in improving the current scheme by those festivals surveyed. A pre-conversation would not be part of the assessment process but may ensure that festivals are suitably informed and realistic about the particular application requirements. This would also strengthen the argument for executive rather than peer-panel assessment.



6.5.

Alignment to *MGAW*

At present the Arts Council supports festivals of national significance and of strategic importance through a programme of annual funding. Whilst the Festivals and Events Scheme provides much needed investment for smaller festivals, it could be argued that the way in which the scheme is constructed leads to the distribution of a large number of small grants with less strategic purpose.

Whilst the current scheme is recognised by festival organisers as being a significant lifeline to the smaller festivals, improvements can be made to the current scheme that will allow festivals the opportunity to build capacity, be more strategic, and plan longer term. It is anticipated that a strategic approach taken in all areas of the consultation process will benefit festivals and better support the strategic objectives of *MGAW*.

A newly augmented funding structure that prioritises festivals with strategies to grow audiences, engage further in their communities, develop volunteering opportunities, build partnerships with their local authority, and provide incubation and support to artists would allow the Arts Council to achieve the following *MGAW* strategic objectives.

As part of the *MGAW* three-year plan:

1. Increase our investment in small festivals from 2017 to support greater participation in the arts throughout the country (public engagement);
2. Advance programmes and partnerships that develop capacity within the arts sector to grow and diversify audiences and increase public engagement with the arts, report on the outcomes of their work, and broaden their income base (developing capacity).

As part of the *MGAW* ten-year plan:

6. Promote and develop good practice in audience development and public engagement;
7. Create opportunities in the arts by particular communities;

9. We will recognise the valuable work of volunteers, especially in venues and festivals throughout the country, and we will incentivise good practice in that regard by organisations we fund;

21. Ensure the arts sector is skilled, resourceful and committed to its own renewal: a) We will support and incentivise good governance and leadership of arts organisations, including attention to succession planning; b) We will look to arts organisations to be collaborative and innovative in their business and management practices and to build a broad base of income sources, public, private and earned.

It can also be argued that the existence of such a scheme would provide the Arts Council with an opportunity to achieve some of its spatial and demographic considerations. The current scheme has supported festival activity in every county in the country, and changes to the scheme would see that largely uninterrupted.

This is an area where the Arts Council in partnership with other agencies, such as Fáilte Ireland and the local authorities, could do more work together. A more detailed overview of the festival ecology and the priorities around the supports of those festivals would be very welcome. As evidenced by statistical information provided by festivals that have participated in the FES, we know that there is good national coverage and we also know that festivals have been very successful in sourcing other income streams. What is unclear is the strategic investment of other funders, possible duplication of funds, other agencies' commitment to festival development, and audience behaviours engaging with festivals in such detail that would better inform decision-making.



7.

Loïse Haenni and Oren Schreiber from Circo Pitanga performing at the National Circus Festival of Ireland, 2016, Tralee
Photographer Paul Woods

Recommendations

Taking into consideration the need to strategically align festival funding with the values and priorities of *MGAW*, and to invest funding in such a way that it allows festivals to build capacity to deliver on *MGAW* objectives, it is recommended that the current Festivals and Events Scheme be renamed to reflect its purpose and redesign.

A 'Festivals Investment Scheme' (FIS) is proposed. The function of the scheme is:

- To ensure strategic investment in established festivals;
- To encourage excellence;
- To build capacity and strengthen festival development;
- To provide growth for festivals whose practice is of strategic importance;
- To provide an opportunity for new festivals to emerge, thus ensuring the lifeblood of new ideas;
- To provide a chain of funding supports that matches the different stages of festival development.

The recommendation is to introduce a three-tier 'banding' system to provide clarity around artform and festival priorities. This would also provide festivals with an opportunity to apply to a scheme that suits their stage of development.

↓ Mantra (France) The Waterford Walls International Street Arts Festival, August 2018 Photographer The Walls Project / Monkey Bird Crew (France)

With the proposed new scheme, each banding would have its own budget and specific criteria. The smallest scheme, Band A, is 'light touch' in execution and provides opportunities for emerging/new festivals and smaller activities. Whilst important, this band would have a smaller overall budget allocated to it, allowing the Arts Council to strategically invest more funding support elsewhere. Bands B and C would essentially replace what is currently Strands 2 and 3 of FES, but the bandwidth of funding available in each would be broader. Band B would provide festivals with support from €5,000–€20,000, allowing a sliding scale of investment, giving festivals the capacity to grow if appropriate. Band C would provide support from €20,000–€35,000. It would provide strategic investment in more mid-scale festivals to enable them to deliver more *MGAW* priorities, such as providing opportunities for artists, growing engagement opportunities, and building audiences. Festivals funded under Band C would be expected to underpin their proposals with robust strategic planning.

Band C would be accompanied (in the application process) by a development plan that would be completed by the festival. This would allow for a more thorough assessment of festivals applying to this band and would support the development of organisations that have an aspiration to migrate to annual funding schemes.

In order for festivals to extend their planning cycles, it is recommended that Bands A, B and C have two deadlines per year. In order to provide the forward planning necessary, application deadlines would require adjustment so as to allow this cohort of festivals to work a year ahead. This would require a forward commitment from the Arts Council, with applications submitted in 2018 supporting 2019 activities. In order to achieve this, a year's adjustment is required to provide festivals with the advanced deadlines they need. A rolling application process is not recommended because this is too 'resource heavy' for the current team to administer effectively and for other teams to assess.



The FES panel consulted as part of the review highlighted a deficit in its knowledge to effectively assess festival applications without more information, such as track-record and historical-programming information. It is difficult to assess a development organisation such as a festival on the basis of one year's programme submitted in the absence of other granular detail, which might give more information and a better context. For the most part heads of artforms within the Arts Council and their advisors will be aware of this information and be able to make a more informed decision. Consequently, the recommendation to Council would be to replace panel assessment with executive assessment. The Council may wish to consider a number of options:

For Awards €5,000–€20,000

- Extending the delegated responsibility to executive staff (ES) to €20,000. This would allow assessment, scoring and decision-making by the ES with Council moderating decisions before approval.

or

- To allow for ES assessment and scoring, with recommendations returned to Council for decision.

For Awards €20,000–€35,000

- Extending the delegated responsibility to executive staff to €35,000. This would allow assessment, scoring and decision-making by the ES, with Council moderating decisions before approval. To provide an additional safeguard and transparency, with a festival's audit panel spot-checking decisions against scheme criteria.

or

- To allow for ES assessment and scoring, with recommendations returned to Council for decision.

More rigour around the evaluation and final reporting stage is also required, with increased consultation recommended across teams that jointly evaluate applications. Resource implications should also be taken into consideration as this will require more time, especially in the first year, when more funding clinics, clarification of criteria and eligibility will be necessary.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the current scheme includes events as well as festivals for funding consideration, the recommendation to Council is to strategically invest in and prioritise festivals rather than one-off activities (chained events, such as a concert series, would be considered important and eligible if the activity was recurring). Festivals have a proven track record as a bridge between audiences and artists, and their recurring cycle allows them opportunities to build audiences and strengthen engagement. One-off events viewed through this strategic prism would be considered a low priority for the suggested scheme. It is also recommended that large requests for marketing costs would also be a low priority, as this income can be sourced from other agencies. A modest cap could be applied as part of the criteria so that funding was directed more towards creative costs than overheads.

A further recommendation (that falls outside of the parameters of this review but which would provide festivals with an opportunity to build capacity) is to scope the feasibility of a 'festival residency' for artists in partnership with local authorities and a 'Go-See' fund for festival organisers. These two additional provisions would provide a suite of supports for festivals, which would complement the new Festival Investment Scheme. These initiatives respond to the requirements of the smaller festivals to build capacity and would have a seismic affect beyond their monetary value. This would also provide a further opportunity to work strategically in partnership with local authorities and to ensure that there is an effective funding ecology for festivals in place.

→ 'Double Take' A collaborative public art project by Shorelines Arts Festival, Portumna, 2018 Photographer Ultan Hynes

7.1.

Key Recommendations (precis)

1. To replace the current FES with a three-tiered Festival Investment Scheme that:
 - Provides strategic investment in established festivals;
 - Encourages excellence;
 - Builds capacity and strengthens festival development;
 - Provides growth for festivals whose practice is of strategic importance;
 - Provides opportunities for new festivals to emerge to ensure the lifeblood of new ideas;
 - Provides a chain of funding supports that matches the different stages of a festival's development.
2. To increase investment in the proposed scheme (FIS) as part of a commitment to invest in small and mid-scale festivals across the country.
3. To allow a forward commitment of €1.4 million in funds for FIS to allow festivals to plan more effectively and build capacity. This would require applicants applying for 2018 festivals in September 2017 and 2019 festivals in 2018.



4. To replace panel assessment with executive assessment, with the following options for Council to ensure transparency and due diligence:

For Awards €5,000–€20,000

- Extending the delegated responsibility to executive staff to €20,000. This would allow assessment, scoring and decision-making with Council's approval.

or

- To allow for executive assessment and scoring, with recommendations going to Council for decision.

For Awards €20,000–€35,000

- Extending the delegated responsibility to executive staff to €35,000. This would allow assessment, scoring and decision-making with Council's approval. To provide an additional safeguard and transparency, a festivals audit panel could spot-check decisions against scheme criteria.

or

- To allow for executive assessment and scoring, with recommendations going to Council for decision.

5. To introduce a new mechanism to measure the evaluation of festival projects across artform teams.
6. To research the feasibility of a Festival Residency Programme and Go-See Award that will support festivals to invest in artists and partner with their local authorities.
7. To recommend further study on the overview of the arts-festival ecology in Ireland so as to identify provision, gaps, national-agency support of arts festivals, and strategies employed for their support.

8.



Laysia Krushkrw performing in Top 8 Street Dance Battle at Hip-Hop on Stage, Dublin, May 2018 Photographer Damien McCarthy

Proposed Scheme Details

Category	Allocation Per Year	Amount of Max Awards that Can Be Given	Applications Rounds Per Year
Band C (20–35k)	735,000	21	Sept. 17** (for 2018) & Feb. 18 (for spring 2019)
Band B (5–20k)	420,000	21	Sept. 17** (for 2018) & Feb. 18 (for spring 2019)
Band A (5K)	245,000	49	Sept. 17** (for 2018) & Feb. 18 (for spring 2019)
TOTALS	1,400,000	91*	2

*This figure is achieved if all applications are awarded maximum grants allowable under each scheme

**The first year would be annual, with biannual rounds to follow.

- **TOTAL FESTIVALS SCHEMES ALLOCATION: €1,400,000**

8.1

Festival Investment Scheme:

Band A

Application	Biannual
Deadlines	September 2017 (for events taking place in 2018); February 2018* (for events taking place Jan.–June 2019); September 2018 (for events taking place July–Dec. 2019).
Assessment Process:	Advisor and executive assessment *To allow for a year's adjustment
Application Limit	€5,000 max.
Maximum Fund	€245,000

Eligibility

- Open to organisations promoting festivals whose programme has a significant focus on the arts;
- New festivals may apply.

Non-eligibility

- Organisations currently in receipt of funding under any Arts Council annual/multi-annual grant programmes (Strategic Funding, Arts Council Grant);
- Organisations that made an application under Band B or C of the same scheme in the same calendar year;
- Organisations whose proposed activities would be better suited to another Arts Council funding scheme;
- Commercial organisations that share out profits to members;
- One-off non-recurring events;

- Organisations based abroad; however, applicants based in the Republic of Ireland may collaborate with an organisation based abroad;
- Competitions or the funding of prizes.

Festival Priorities of Scheme

Artistic development (as outlined in the Festival's Policy Alignment Documentation);

Community and public engagement.

Artform Priorities

As outlined in Policy Alignment Documentation.

Band A Applications Mandatory Supporting Documentation

- Mission statement;
- Artistic programme for forthcoming festival;
- A clear plan for how the programme will be delivered;
- Engagement and audience-development statement.

8.2

Festival Investment Scheme:

Band B

Application	Biannual
Deadlines	September 2017 (for events taking place in 2018); February 2018* (for events taking place Jan.–June 2019); September 2018 (for events taking place July–Dec. 2019).
Assessment Process:	Advisor and executive assessment *To allow for a year's adjustment
Application Limit	€5,001–€20,000 max.
Maximum Fund	€420,000

Eligibility

- Must have been established for at least two years;
- Have established a relationship with the local authority (preferably arts office), Local Enterprise Office or a significant sponsor/trust;
- Be committed to one of the following: a creative/artistic partnership, a community/audience-engagement initiative.

Non-eligibility

- Organisations currently in receipt of funding under any Arts Council annual/multi-annual grant programmes (Strategic Funding, Arts Council Grant);
- Organisations that made an application under Band A or C of the same scheme in the same calendar year;
- Organisations whose proposed activities would be better suited to another Arts Council funding scheme;
- Commercial organisations that share out profits to members;

- Organisations based abroad; however, applicants based in the Republic of Ireland may collaborate with an organisation based abroad;
- Competitions or the funding of prizes.

Application Additional Questions

Where does your festival fit within your local-authority arts strategy?

How long has your festival been established?

Festival Priorities of Scheme

Support of artists;

Public engagement;

Strengthening sense of place/investing in a creative community.

Artform Priorities

As outlined in Policy Alignment Documentation.

Band B Applications Mandatory Supporting Documentation

- Artistic policy;
- Artistic programme for forthcoming festival;
- A clear plan for how the programme will be delivered;
- Public-engagement strategy – outlining the quality of engagement with the arts and artists that the festival is proposing to provide;
- Marketing and PR plan.

8.3

Festival Investment Scheme:

Band C

Application	Biannual
Deadlines	September 2017 (for events taking place in 2018); February 2018* (for events taking place Jan.–June 2019); September 2018 (for events taking place July–Dec. 2019).
Assessment Process:	Advisor and executive assessment *To allow for a year's adjustment
Application Limit	€20,001–€35,000 max.
Maximum Fund	€735,000

Eligibility

- Festival must have been established for at least five years;
- Have an ongoing relationship with the local-authority arts office or a significant sponsor/trust;
- Be committed to one of the following: presenting international work, featuring some new or recent work, commissioning work, be a testing ground for new collaborations, have an educational or outreach programme, have a year-round presence characterised by ongoing development.

Non-eligibility

- Organisations currently in receipt of funding under any Arts Council annual/multi-annual grant programmes (Strategic Funding, Arts Council Grant);
- Organisations that made an application under Band A or B of the same scheme in the same calendar year;
- Organisations whose proposed activities would be better suited to another Arts Council funding scheme;
- Commercial organisations that share out profits to members;
- Organisations based abroad; however, applicants based in the Republic of Ireland may collaborate with an organisation based abroad;
- Competitions or the funding of prizes.

Application Additional Questions

Where does your festival fit within your local-authority arts strategy?

How long has your festival been established?

Are you carrying a surplus/loss from last year's festival (if so, how much)?

↓ Dan Kitchener, (DANK / UK) for The Waterford Walls
International Street Arts Festival, August 2018 Photographer
The Walls Project



Festival Priorities of Scheme

Artist development (as outlined in Policy Alignment Documentation);

Public engagement;

Strengthening sense of place/investing in a creative community;

Support of artists;

Artistic leadership.

Artform Priorities

As outlined in Policy Alignment Documentation.

FIS Applications Mandatory Supporting Documentation

- Strategic plan including mission statement;
- Audience-development strategy;
- Public-engagement strategy;
- Marketing strategy;
- Evaluation documentation from previous festivals;
- Management accounts for previous year's festival;
- Proof of diversification of income;
- Proof of partnership.



Will Flanagan from Passpartout Circus and Street Art Company performing at the National Circus Festival of Ireland, Tralee, 2016
Photographer Paul Woods

Appendices



9.1.

Appendix 1: Festival and Events Scheme Review Participants

During the course of the review, three round-table discussions were held: the first with arts managers in the Arts Council, the second with a delegation of local-authority arts officers from around the country (where festivals were of strategic importance), and the third with managers/voluntary committee members of festivals who were applicants or recipients of funding under the Festivals and Events Scheme. The research team also conducted interviews with festival departments in public funding agencies in countries of comparable scale in relation to policy and festival programme initiatives.

The Arts Council acknowledges the support and feedback from the following participants in the review:

Liz Meaney	Director of Performing & Local Arts	Arts Council
Paul Flynn	Head of Traditional Arts	Arts Council
Davide Terlingo	Head of Dance, Circus and Spectacle	Arts Council
Sarah Bannon	Head of Literature	Arts Council
Marcella Bannon	Head of Literature (Acting)	Arts Council
Sinéad O'Reilly	Head of Local Arts & Arts Participation	Arts Council
Toby Dennett	Head of Visual Arts (Acting)	Arts Council
Niall Doyle	Head of Music	Arts Council
Rachel West	Head of Theatre	Arts Council
Karl Wallace	Head of Festivals	Arts Council
Melanie Scott	Arts Officer	Tipperary County Council
Jean Brennan	Arts Officer	Cork City Council
Kate Kennelly	Arts Officer	Kerry County Council
Philip Delamere	Arts Officer	Leitrim County Council
Rachel Holstead	Arts Officer	Ealaín na Gaeltachta
Sinead Connolly	Arts Officer	Dublin City Council
David Teevan	Festivals Adviser	Arts Council
Sinéad O'Reilly	Head of Local Arts	Arts Council
Natalie Byrne	Festivals & Venues Assistant	Arts Council
Regina O'Shea	Festivals & Venues Officer	Arts Council
James Harrold	Arts Officer	Galway County Council
Brian Doherty	Management committee	Boyle Arts Festival
Caoilian Sherlock	Festival Director	Makeshift Ensemble (Quarter Block Festival)
Carolyn Brown	Management committee	Mountains 2 Sea Festival
Cora Gunter	Management committee	Ennis Book Club Festival
Eszter Nemethi	Festival Director	Makeshift Ensemble (Quarter Block Festival)
Grace Toland	Management committee	Inishowen Traditional Singing Weekend
Kath Gorman	Programme Adviser	Terryglass Arts Festival
Lucy Medicott	Chief Executive Officer	ISAACS
Mags Walsh	Adviser YPCE	Arts Council
Mary McGrath	Manager	First Cut Youth Film Festival
Maura O'Cronin	Management committee	Galway Early Music
Niamh Ní Bhaoill	Festival Director	Scoil Cheoil an Earraigh
Paul Perry	Management committee	Ennis Book Club Festival
Siobhán Mulcahy	Arts Officer	Clare County Council
Tara McGowan	Festival Director	Cairde Sligo Arts Festival
Carys Wynne-Morgan	Development Officer	Arts Council of Wales
Lorna Duguid	Multi-artform Manager	Creative Scotland
Sonya Whitefield	Development Officer	Arts Council of Northern Ireland
Briar Monro	Senior Arts Adviser – Community Arts Pou Whakahaere Matua Toi – Toi Hapori	Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa
Karl Wallace	Head of Festivals	The Arts Council

9.2.

Appendix 2: Festival and Events Scheme Review Questionnaire

The following questionnaire was sent to 569 festivals that had received funding under the Festivals and Events Scheme between 2014 and 2017.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the Arts Council's Festivals and Events Scheme Review survey. This funding programme, which has been in operation since 2004, is currently under review with a view to improving its fitness for purpose to respond to the needs of the evolving field of festivals and events throughout the country. We much appreciate your taking the time to fill in this questionnaire, which we estimate will take approximately twenty minutes to complete. The feedback we receive will inform our approach to the remodelling of the scheme. The survey closes on 13 April 2017.

Many thanks for your cooperation.

Our review objectives:

- Enhance our understanding of the culture and impact of arts-led festivals and events
- Review the Arts Council's supports for festivals and events within the overall context of *Making Great Art Work* (MGAW) implementation
- Discuss the potential of festivals and events to realise the goals and objectives of MGAW
- Understand how festivals and events can build their capacity

1. What is your festival mission / For what purpose was your festival established?

Alternative

Does your festival have a mission statement? If yes, what is it. (max. 100 words)

If No, for what purpose was your festival established? (max. 100 words)

2. Did you receive a Festivals and Events Scheme grant to support your most recent festival?

3. What was your financial turnover for your most recent festival (please do not include in-kind support).

(Please tick one box only.)

TURNOVER	TICK
€0–€20,000	
€20,001–€50,000	
€50,001–€100,000	
€100,001–€150,000	
€150,000+	

4. Do you receive in-kind support towards your festival? If so, please provide the most recent figures.

(In-kind support is defined as material, labour, equipment, resources, expertise given instead of cash support.)

(Volunteer Ireland recommends a cash equivalent of €20 per hour to calculate volunteer time.)

IN-KIND SUPPORT	TICK
No in-kind support given	
€20,000 and under	
€20,001–€50,000	
€50,001–€100,000	
€100,001–€150,000	
€150,000+	

5. **What is the composition of your festival's operational team** (the team that is involved in planning, mounting and tidying up after the event)? (Please provide numbers for each answer.)

6.

STAFFING / MANAGEMENT	AMOUNT
Paid full-time staff	
Paid part-time staff	
Short-term freelance staff on contract	
Volunteers	
Services offered pro bono	
Other (please describe)	

7. **Please give us a breakdown of your audience in percentages.**

AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION	PERCENTAGE %
Percentage of your audience that is local (from local area; living within 30-mile radius)	
Percentage of your audience that are visitors (non-local; living in Ireland)	
Percentage of your audience that is from overseas	

8. **Does your festival cater for a specific audience type – e.g. children and young people?**

(If you answer 'yes', please provide details.)

Alternative question

Is your festival focused on attracting a niche audience – e.g. harp players, children and young people, Manchester United supporters, book-club attendees?

No.....

Yes.....

Describe your audience. (max. 30 words)

9. **Does your festival offer year-round activity?** (If you answer 'yes', please outline the activities you offer outside of normal 'festival time'; these might include workshops, talks, classes, etc.)

No.....

Yes..... (please list activities below.)

10. **What percentage of your festival activity is free?** (By festival activity we mean the percentage of the programme, not the percentage of the audience.) If you do offer FREE EVENTS, can you tell us why?

	PERCENTAGE %
Percentage of your festival activity that has an entry fee	
Percentage of your festival activity that is free	

For what reason do you offer free events? _____

In order for your festival to build capacity, which of the following supports would you consider necessary?
(Please tick as many boxes as apply.)

FESTIVAL SUPPORTS	TICK
Local-authority resources (e.g. venues, licensing permissions, refuse and wastage supports)	
Networking (with artists or other festivals)	
A resource/representative organisation	
Free materials	
Volunteer training	
Professional development	
Strategic planning	
Marketing support/advice	
Fundraising supports	
Other (please list)	

11. What do you think your festival has provided in terms of outcomes and impact in your local area or artform since it was set up? (3 bullet points)

12. What do you consider to be your festival's current strengths and opportunities? (3 bullet points)

13. What do you consider to be your festival's current weaknesses and threats? (3 bullet points)

14. Does your organisation currently have any of the following strategic plans in document form?
(Please tick all that apply.)

STRATEGIC PLANNING	TICK
Business plan	
Audience-development strategy	
Finance and fundraising plan	
Marketing and PR plan	
Artistic policy	

15. Thinking about the Festivals and Events Scheme, what suggestions might you have for improving the scheme?

16. In order to plan effectively when preparing your festival, which of the following funding options would you consider helpful? Please tell us why.

FUNDING OPTIONS	WHY WOULD IT BE HELPFUL?
Pre-conversation with Arts Council adviser	
Clearer definition of stranding or banding structures	
More frequent funding rounds in a year	
Rolling application fund for small grants	
Funding clinics	
Other	

17. Any other comments?

Thank you for completing the Festivals and Events Scheme Review questionnaire.

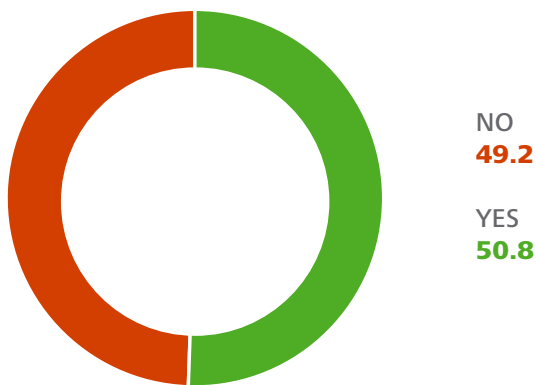
9.3.
Appendix 3: Festival and Events Scheme Review Questionnaire Results

Those invited to take part in the questionnaire: (applicants from 2004–2017)

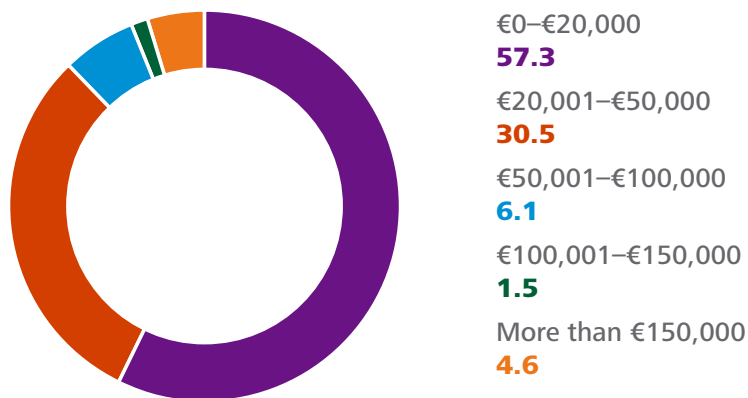
Total that accepted an invitation to take part in the survey: **569**

Total number of respondents: **260** Respondent rate: **46%**

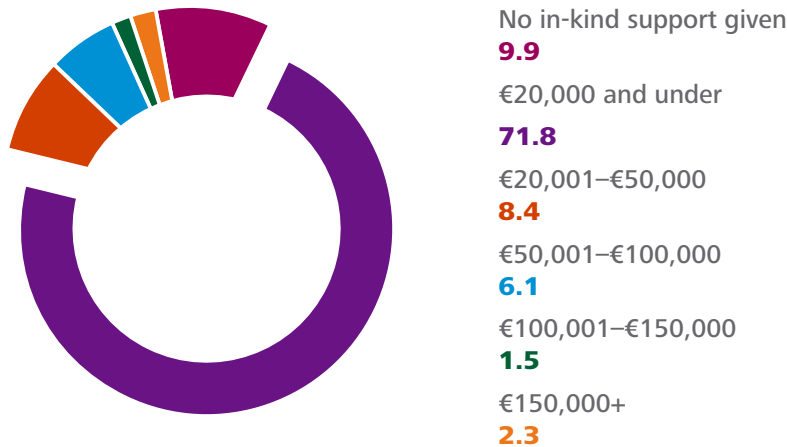
1. Did you receive a Festivals and Events Scheme grant to support your most recent festival?



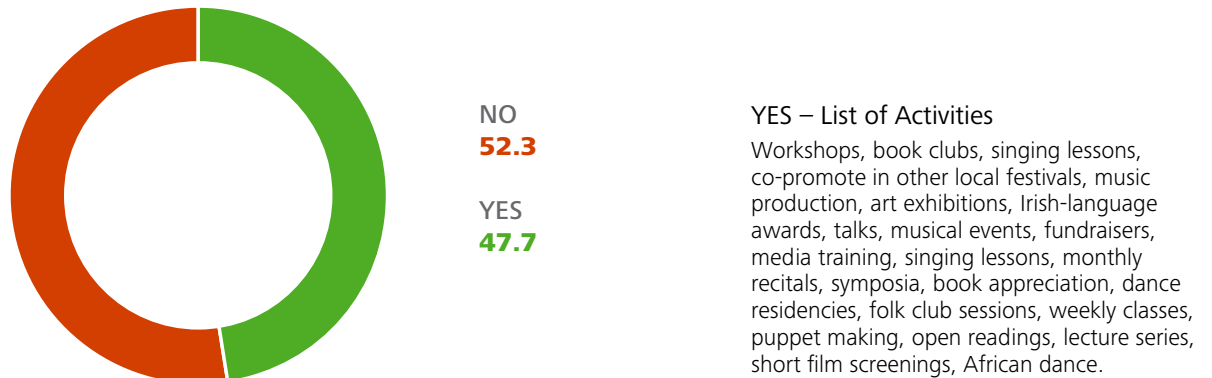
2. What was your financial turnover for your most recent festival?



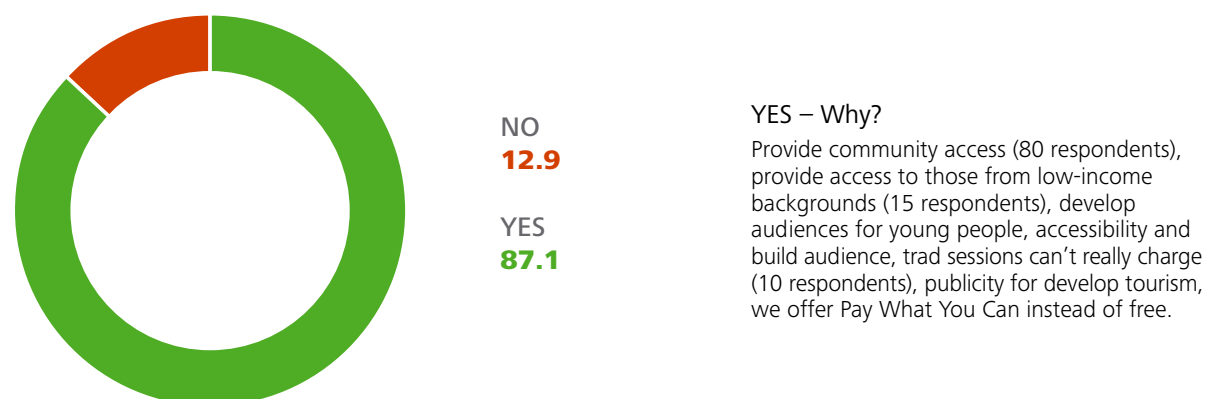
3. Did you receive in-kind support towards your festival? If so, please provide the most recent figures. (In-kind support is defined as material, labour, equipment, resources, expertise given instead of cash support.) (Volunteer Ireland recommends a cash equivalent of €20 per hour to calculate volunteer time.)



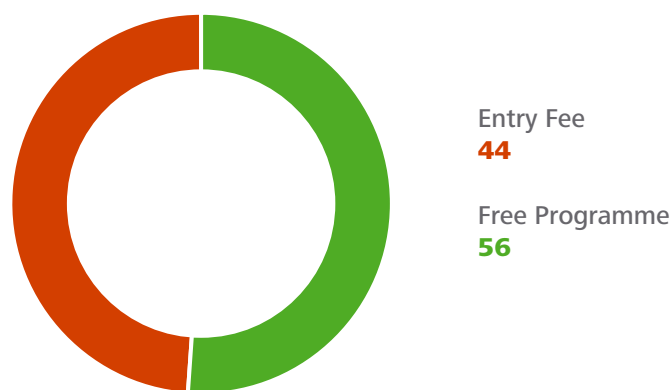
4. Does your festival offer year-round activity?



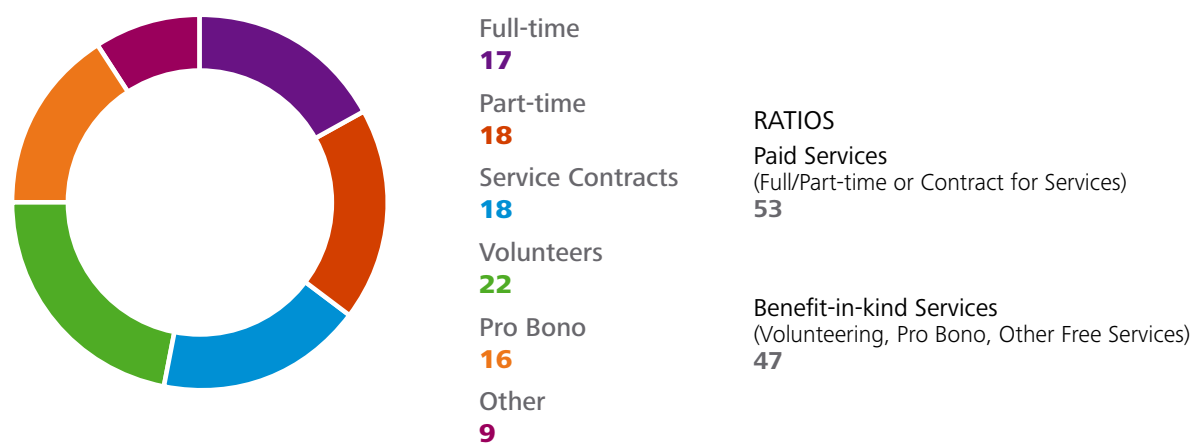
5. Did you receive a Festivals and Events Scheme grant to support your most recent festival?



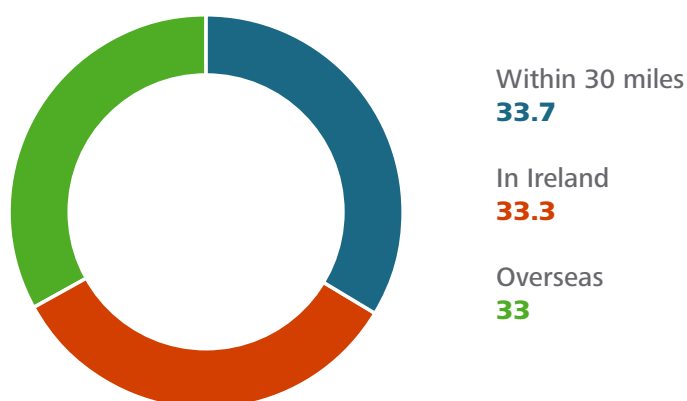
6. What percentage of your festival activity is free events and events with an entry fee?



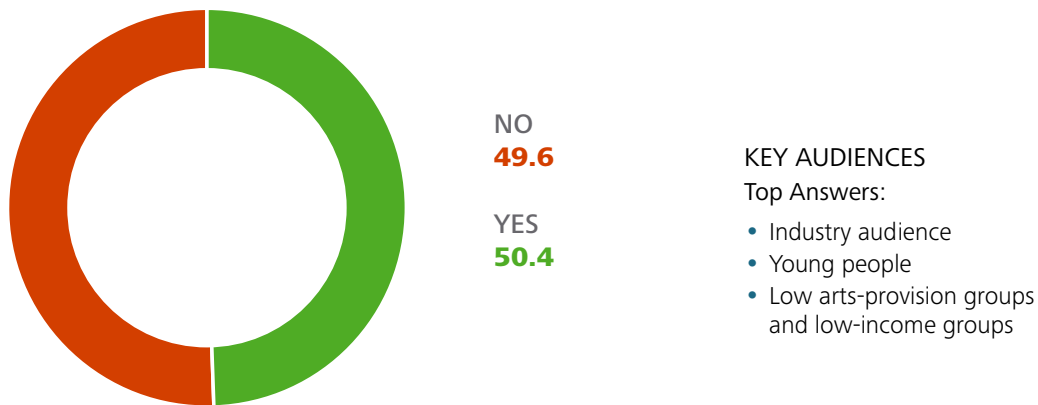
7. What is the composition of your festival’s operational team (the team that is involved in planning, mounting and tidying up after the event)?



8. Please give us a breakdown of where your audience originates, in percentages



9. Is your festival focused on attracting a specific audience, for example harp players, children and young people, theatre practice, etc.?



10. In order for your festival to build capacity, which of the following supports would you consider necessary? Please order from most important to least important.



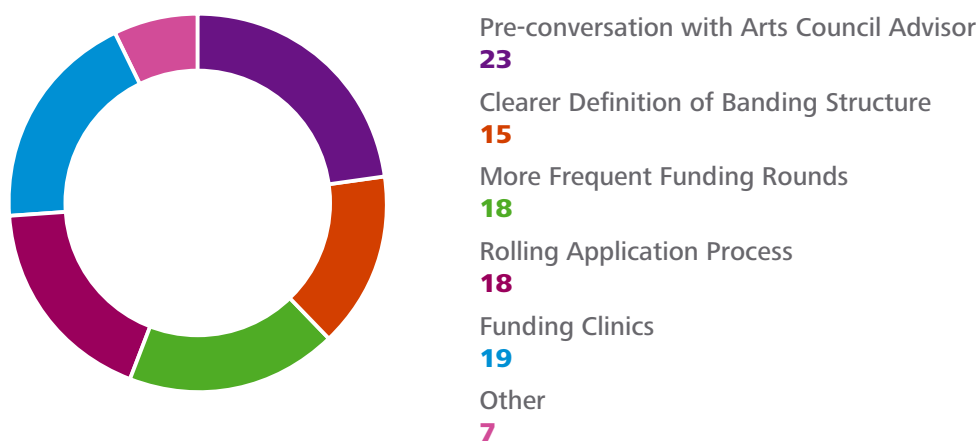
11. What impact has your festival had since it was set up?

- Introducing professional arts into rural areas
- Developing artforms
- Young peoples' access to literature
- platform for Irish-language arts
- Audience crossover
- Sense of place within community
- Social cohesion
- Visibility of a rural area
- Providing children with instrumentation
- Developing tourism
- Supporting emerging artists
- Development of young artists
- Exposure to international artists
- Artform collaboration
- Animation of local spaces
- Ethnic recognition and integration
- Highlighting other cultures

12. Does your organisation have any of the following strategic plans in place?
(Please tick all that apply.)



13. In order to plan effectively when preparing your festival, which of the following options would you consider helpful?



14. Please describe Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for your festival.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community cohesion • Partnership with local stakeholders • Development of local-arts infrastructure • Community involvement and support • Curatorial strength and arts-led programme • Expertise • Quality programme • Team with skills that are transferable for other local events, a loyal following 	<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of tourism • Professional development • Diverse programme • Upskilling • Attracting visitors • Benefits to and growth to local economy • Apply to other Arts Council scheme (Travel and Training) • Multi-annual funding would allow for longer planning cycle
<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited resources, maintaining finances • Understaffed • Underfunded • Voluntary committee overstretched • No dedicated arts/admin facilities • Lack of support from local authority • Lack of long-term planning • Lack of professional marketing • Capacity to build sponsorship 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpredictability of funding • Venue infrastructure changes and affects programme • Weather • Succession planning does not regularly take place • Succession planning for voluntary committee and attracting new lifeblood • Over-reliance on public funding • Sustainability • Competition from another festival • Ticket-price ceiling

15. Thinking about the Festival and Event Scheme, what suggestions might you have for improving the scheme?

Word Cloud representing answers (in volume):



Cover images:

National Circus Festival of Ireland, Tralee, 2016.
Photographer Paul Woods

Cairde, Sligo Arts Festival, Parkfest, 2018
Photographer Peter Martin

The Walls Have Ears, Phil Minton at Cairde, Sligo Arts
Festival, 2017 Photographer Colin Gillen

Towers and Tales, Lismore Story Festival, 2016, Caroline
Busher with children from Bunscoil Bhothar na Naomh
Photographer Sarah Kim-Watchorn

Passpartout Circus and Street Art Company performing
at the National Circus Festival of Ireland, Tralee, 2016
Photographer Paul Woods



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ISBN 978-1-904291-56-5

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