

The Arts



Northern Ireland - Funders' Brief

- ❖ The arts have been long recognised as a lever for direct and indirect social and economic development and a vehicle for fostering improved community relations
- ❖ There is a vibrant and diverse community and professional arts sector with a focus on participative approaches in disadvantaged areas and engagement of disadvantaged and marginalised people
- ❖ The arts sector in Northern Ireland is highly dependent on public funding with only 13% coming from the private sector. It is facing a public expenditure cut of the order of £4.2m over the next 4 years
- ❖ Northern Ireland lags well behind the UK overall in support to arts, public funding was the lowest of the UK regions at £7.33 / person and giving from individuals being 23% of total private investment compared to 55% across UK

Context

The lead Government Department is the **Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL)**. DCAL provides funding for the arts in Northern Ireland, sets arts policy and supports arts based initiatives. The regional

agency responsible for the development of the arts is the **Arts Council of Northern Ireland**. It provides financial support for artists and arts organisations. The launch of the Arts Council's 5 year strategic plan 'Creative Connections' in 2007¹ signalled the start of a concerted

campaign for the arts, targeting the disparity between government spending in Northern Ireland and other UK regions.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure now however faces one of the largest funding cuts compared to the other government departments, despite being the smallest with an annual budget of just 1% of total government spending. It is set to lose £14.7m current expenditure over the 2011-2015 budget period, equating to a 13% real terms decrease². Almost one third of these cuts are to be borne by the arts, with the Arts Council itself facing a loss of £4.2m of its budget over the next 4 years. The Arts Council has responded by initiating a campaign 'Fair Deal for the Arts' – Chief Executive Roisín McDonagh said 'these cuts will cause significant and potentially irreversible harm to the arts, putting jobs and front line services at risk.'

On a more positive note the Arts infrastructure will be boosted by the opening of the MAC (Metropolitan Arts Centre) and the refurbished Lyric theatre later this year - however fulfilling the potential of these venues will add to the pressure on the already constrained Arts Council revenue budget.

Also of note is Derry/Londonderry's year as UK City of Culture 2013. Some headline events already

planned include various Cultural Olympiad events, being a host port for the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race, and hosting the Turner prize exhibition.

Practice and Issues

The value of the arts

It is widely recognised that the arts make a contribution in terms of employment, regeneration, health, education and social cohesion and that creativity fostered by the arts underlies the establishment of a real knowledge-based economy.

In Northern Ireland there is a vibrant and diverse community and professional arts sector, with a strong focus on participative approaches in disadvantaged areas and engagement of disadvantaged and marginalised people.

'Why the Arts Matter' is an informative series of articles, across a range of disciplines, hosted on the web portal - www.culturenorthernireland.org

Data on the quantitative and qualitative value of the arts is captured in the very comprehensive Digest produced by the Arts Council³, demonstrating the breadth of impact obtained from its investment. In 2008/9 it provided grants totaling

£18m (£5m of which was Lottery Funds) contributing to its mission to 'place the arts at the heart of social, economic and creative life'.

As well as its main annual support programme for arts organisations it offers other project funding, small grants, and schemes for individual artists. Last year it announced an investment of £700,000 in a new three year programme designed to encourage older people to take part in the arts, co-funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies. At the other end of the age spectrum Cahoots NI, a children's theatre company, delivers 'Math a Magic' to 11 year olds with additional support from Northern Bank.

The **Community Foundation for Northern Ireland** has long held the belief that the linking of arts activities to practical community action and the promotion of cultural programmes can do much to strengthen and rejuvenate local communities and that this can be a powerful tool in conflict resolution. It recognises the empowerment benefits of participation in a community arts project through community capacity building and, on an individual level, improved self-confidence and life opportunities.

Public funding dependency

The Arts sector in Northern Ireland is highly dependent on public funding with only 13% coming from the private sector. NI lags well behind the UK overall with support to arts from individuals being 23% of total private investment compared to 55% across the UK.

Moreover there is very limited capacity within the arts sector to maximise opportunities to diversify income. There remains a skills gap and associated lack of confidence in relatively untapped areas such as individual giving and cultural philanthropy. **Arts & Business Northern Ireland** connects companies and individuals to cultural organisations through mentoring and Board placement programmes, and offers training in strategic business planning, sponsorship, individual giving and strategic fundraising. Areas such as business skills transfer and mentoring are an increasingly important part of their work.

Collaboration, partnership and mentoring

It will become increasingly critical to build on peer to peer mentoring initiatives such as that led by **Creative and Cultural Skills**, **Audiences NI**, and **Arts and Business**.

Representative bodies such as **Voluntary Arts Ireland** draw together voluntary arts and crafts groups providing information, advice and training, and ensure that their interests are represented to policy makers, funders and politicians. Kevin Murphy, Director of VAI, estimates size of the sector to be 1,400 groups involving some 200,000 people. He suggests *'it is time to make very strategic investments and to be brave'*.

Encouraging careers in the Arts

Much still needs to be done to encourage young people into a career in the arts and to ensure the education sector stays in tune with industry needs. Creative and Cultural Skills has been pioneering efforts to influence and inform career choices.

Philanthropic Challenges

Public expenditure cuts will impact disproportionately on the arts sector -it is clear that the core arts infrastructure is under threat and will need to find alternative sources of funds. *'In this time of austerity when budgets are so tight, the arts are a beacon of light!'*⁴

The Arts offers broad social and economic impact, and remains a diverse and effective vehicle for addressing issues of cultural identity, mutual respect and understanding. There is a need for investment in support/guidance/advice and small amounts of seed funding and the encouragement of:

- ❖ effective strategic business planning and governance
- ❖ income diversification
- ❖ the sharing of resources
- ❖ links between the professional arts sector and community arts organisations
- ❖ collaboration between organisations locally, regionally, and cross-border

There may be scope for innovative collaborative approaches between public and private funders to address critical issues over the next 5 years.

The **Funders' Brief** series has been compiled by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland with support from the Santander Foundation (formerly the Abbey Charitable Trust) as part of an initiative to increase understanding of needs and issues, and funding from Charitable Trusts.

¹ Creative Connections - A five year plan for developing the arts 2007-2012, ACNI.

² Draft Budget 2011-15: Spending and Savings Proposals within the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, 30 December 2010.

³ Digest of Arts Statistics Northern Ireland 2010, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2010.

⁴ Extract from Philip Hammond's topical lyrics to 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' source - www.artscouncil-ni.org.