

Advancing Music



Music Policy and Strategy

The Arts Council (An Chomhairle Ealaíon) is the statutory public agency for developing and funding the Arts in Ireland.

This Music Policy and Strategy Statement and its associated programme of actions was developed in 2022 and 2023 following widespread sectoral and public consultation and research. This included direct contributions from 628 individuals and organisations in the music community, and also took into account the 2021 Arts Insight research commissioned by the Council. This research focused on the public and the arts, particularly in relation to music.

More specifically, this Music Policy and Strategy Statement expresses the Council's overarching 2016–2025 strategy Making Great Art Work and its priorities of public engagement and the artist.

It also seeks to reflect and strengthen Council policies that cross over into several fields. These include policies and strategies on:

- Paying the artist
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Digital
- Spatial
- International
- Arts Council's Creative Schools programme

As part of the Council's environmental-sustainability policies, a commitment to environmental sustainability of Council music programmes will be pursued.

The Music Policy and Strategy Statement stresses the important common ground with other art forms and arts practices developed by the Council. (In this regard, traditional Irish music is part of a separate Council policy and programme area: Traditional Arts.)

The purpose of the Music Policy and Strategy Statement is to provide a clear framework to guide the Council's future decision-making in its development and support of music, as well as setting out current strategic priorities. An accompanying implementation plan provides an initial framework of actions to give effect to this, and outlines how the Council will plan its work in music in the coming years.

Music is an enormously diverse art form embracing many genres and styles. It is a universal form of expression of our humanity that touches and enriches the lives of almost every person.

There is an enormous body of Irish and international musical heritage of all types. Building on and evolving from this, there is constant, vibrant creation of new music. All of this reflects and shapes our personal musical lives, our community, and national and international musical culture.

The Council's music policy seeks to reflect and serve contemporary Ireland in all its diversity. It is framed by a strong sense of mission that each adult and child in Ireland should:

- Be able to express themselves musically in styles and genres of their choice;
- Be able to affordably access musical skills, education, learning and information to enable this;
- Have access and exposure to their local, national and international music heritage;
- Be able to be involved in creating, performing and listening to music of their choice to the greatest extent possible.

Equally, it is a core Council mission to support the development of music artists and other music professionals at every stage of their formation and career progression to make music of artistic excellence and quality in a spirit of open creativity, fulfilment of potential and artistic freedom.

The Council's work as the statutory public agency for developing and funding music has three main elements:

- Direct actions and support programmes for music artists and organisations;
- Public-policy development and advocacy in music;
- Cooperation, collaboration and partnership with other national and international bodies that play important roles in musical life.

The approach to framing the Council's strategies is rooted in the learning and insights derived from the substantial programme of consultation and research carried out between December 2021 and October 2022. The extensive input and information from these, further informed by the Council's experiences in working with artists, groups and organisations, have been the primary influences.

It is clear from the widespread consultation that many aspects of the Council's work in its primary programmes are considered highly effective and make a significant, positive impact. There is a call for these programmes to continue to constantly improve and meet changing needs.

Equally, the research, consultation and interaction by the Council with the music community has identified a number of areas that require changes in how the Council's programmes support and develop music.

The consultation and research process has also identified a major need for a new, specialised national approach to investing in the development of the Irish commercial-music industry as a creative industry, in line with best international practice. As with the successful development of the Irish screen industry, this has potential transformative benefits for commercial-music artists and audiences as well as benefitting the national economy.

A three-pillar framework has been used to present thirteen broad strategies the Council will use in the years ahead, along with thirty-nine initial actions that will give effect to these.

A more detailed initial implementation plan will guide the implementation of these actions. This will be developed and adapted on an ongoing basis to guide the Council's work in future years.



Photographer: Ruth Medjber

In this three-pillar framework, there are thirteen strategies the Council will use. These are broken down as follows:

- A. Four strategies affirm our core policy and our commitment to continuing, developing and evolving our supports to individual artists, groups and organisations.
- B. Eight strategies focus on change in areas where it is needed and where taking a new direction will help to bring about necessary change.
- C. One strategy addressing the need for development of the Irish commercial-music industry.

Each strategy has a series of actions to bring it into being. The actions are set out here under each strategy. They are also set out in a separate timed implementation plan that will be reviewed and updated regularly.



Photographer: Ruth Connolly

A. ‘Retain and Develop’ Strategies

A1 All music

The Arts Council will, as a core value, maintain its open, all-genres approach in its music policy and programmes.

Actions

- **A1.1.** We will continually review music-funding schemes, priorities, processes and communications to assess appropriateness and to improve access for artists and organisations across different genres and practices.
- **A1.2.** We will complete and periodically repeat current research analysing Arts Council funding applications and outcomes in different music genres.

A2 Individual music artists

The Arts Council will continue to develop and evolve responsive funding supports for individual creative and performing music artists through the main Council funding schemes.

Action

- **A2.1.** We will take measures to appropriately prioritise new and emerging applicants across different music genres and practices in our individual funding schemes.

A3 Music groups and organisations

The Arts Council will continue to develop and evolve appropriate funding and other supports for music groups, ensembles and organisations through the main Council funding schemes.

Action

- **A3.1.** We will review Arts Council supports for music resource organisations in the context of the needs of the music sector(s), genres and practices as part of a wider Council resource-organisation review.

A4 Other policy priorities

We will continue to develop our music programmes to reflect and give effect to Arts Council cross-art-form policy priorities (for example, Paying the Artist Policy, Spatial Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and others).

Action

- **A4.1.** We will incorporate cross-art-form Council policies (for example, Paying the Artist Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, International Policy, Spatial Policy) in periodic reviews of music-funding schemes, priorities and guidelines.

B. ‘Change Focus’ Strategies

The main ‘Change Focus’ strategies and their actions are those that target those areas of the Council’s work identified in the consultation and research as needing change and development.

B1 Advocacy

The Arts Council will be a more proactive advocate and partner for change in music and music education. It will do this by commissioning research and by engaging and partnering with government and other appropriate bodies.

Actions

- **B1.1.** We will engage with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in relation to curriculum music-education access, design, practice and impact at first- and second-level schools.
- **B1.2.** We will advocate with national and local government for the provision of accessible music rehearsal, studio and performance venues nationwide.

– **B1.3.** We will advocate with national and local government for the provision of accessible music-instrument resources to facilitate increased music participation.

– **B1.4.** We will advocate with government, Coimisiún na Meán, and public-service and commercial broadcasting organisations to strengthen policy and practice in the broadcasting of Irish music of all genres.

– **B1.5.** We will commission research on demographics and equality and diversity in music education, participation and professional activity across different music genres (including main commercial-music genres).

B2 Particular music-genre supports

The Arts Council will undertake a range of measures to broaden, strengthen and tailor supports across a range of different music genres,

Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– B2.1. We will invest in continued expansion of artist-development supports across a wide diversity of music genres (including country music, popular music and electronic music) through specialist resource organisations.– B2.2. We will adapt and coordinate current Council music programmes and supports for artists, audiences and participants to complement strategies, programmes and measures arising from the proposed new approach to supporting the development of the commercial-music Industry.– B2.3. We will develop and implement a plan to significantly strengthen jazz/improvised-music development, beginning in 2023.– B2.4. We will develop a programme of year-round regional-centre	<p>professional performing group residencies across different formats and genres by working with local government and appropriate education partners nationally.</p> <p>– B2.5. We will act as a proactive facilitating partner to establish public-access music archives and resources in Irish popular-music genres, jazz, classical music and opera to complement national archive work in traditional music and other art forms.</p> <p>– B2.6. We will support production of, and access to, recordings and/or performing editions of important historic Irish music in all genres.</p> <p>– B2.7. We will explore and, where possible, introduce more time-responsive funding supports to better reflect the different planning and opportunity time frames of some music genres.</p>

B3 Music participation

The Arts Council will increase and broaden national-level supports for organisations and initiatives to bring about accessible and affordable opportunities for participation in music-making by children, young people and adults.

Actions

- **B3.1.** We will continue and develop our existing national-level music participation and strategic partnerships and supports, including our partnership with Music Generation.
- **B3.2.** We will engage proactively with other national, amateur music-making organisations to establish supportive partnerships.

– **B3.3.** We will proactively encourage and facilitate development of other national development and resource organisations in genres and practices where gaps are identified.

– **B3.4.** We will avail of the Arts Council–local authorities strategic partnership to develop more strategic funding of local voluntary and amateur music-making.

B4 Artist applicant development

The Arts Council will strengthen professional development and training supports for music artists and key artist-support professions at all career stages, including a focus on new- and emerging-artist applicants.

Actions

- **B4.1.** We will adapt or introduce supports to meet artist needs for specialist international education, training and development in music.
- **B4.2.** We will review with relevant resource organisations and other prospective partners the potential for strengthening career planning and technical and business training for artists, artist managers and other key artist-support professionals.
- **B4.3.** We will ensure these actions enable investment in new artists, applicants and initiatives across different music genres.

B5 Music recording

The Arts Council will review, redesign and increase its supports for professional artist-centred music recording and dissemination.

Actions

- **B5.1.** We will work with Arts Council traditional arts and different music-genre expertise to devise a common approach and to strengthen Council supports for professional music recordings.
- **B5.2.** We will establish and maintain dialogue with independent Irish recording-industry trade organisations and key Irish recording-industry rights organisations.

B6 Music facilities and venues

The Arts Council will engage with arts organisations and local authorities to develop sustainable venues for specialist, innovative, experimental and emerging music performance, rehearsal and recording in key centres.

Actions

- **B6.1.** We will commission research to identify optimum models of provision of a national network of accessible performance, rehearsal and recording venues for new and emerging artists in a range of specialist music genres and practices, and for community music-making.
- **B6.2.** Building on this, we will undertake an action-research pilot in partnership with appropriate local authorities, arts organisations and artists to trial specialist music-venue and rehearsal facilities.

B7 Increased linkage with intersecting genres, art forms and practices

The Arts Council will develop its music policy and programmes with intersecting art forms and arts practices, and also develop appropriate Council policy and supports for music theatre and musical theatre.

Actions

- **B7.1.** We will formalise and strengthen linkages and collaboration across Arts Council teams that intersect with music, including traditional arts, opera, multidisciplinary arts, festivals, arts centres, young people, children and education, arts participation, local-authority arts, etc.

- **B7.2.** We will work with the Arts Council’s Theatre team and Opera team to develop a Council policy for support of music-theatre and musical-theatre artists and organisations.

B8 Partnerships

The Arts Council will develop and strengthen partnerships with international, national and regional bodies with the shared interest of developing music.

Actions

- **B8.1.** We will strengthen and deepen existing relationships, coordination, collaboration and partnership initiatives (where appropriate) with government and other national bodies engaged in music development.
- **B8.2.** We will strengthen and develop collaboration with the Arts

Council of Northern Ireland on music development on an all-island basis.

- **B8.3.** We will explore development of a new strategic relationship between the Arts Council and Coimisiún na Meán.
- **B8.4.** We will develop structured regular dialogue with Irish commercial-music industry rights and representative organisations.
- **B8.5.** We will take part in, and engage with, the work of key international music and music-education policy bodies and networks.
- **B8.6.** We will also collaborate with government as appropriate on initiatives to support and develop opportunities for artists as part of the night-time economy development programme.

C1 Irish commercial music industry development

The Arts Council will commission research to underpin proposals for a new, focused approach to sustained investment in the development of the Irish commercial music industry(ies), and will work with key national stakeholders to realise this.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">– C1.1. We will commission research on international models of best practice in commercial-music industry development to identify the optimum organisational and funding model(s) for the development of the Irish commercial music industry.– C1.2. We will work closely with key stakeholders to bring a national commercial music industry development strategy and programme into being, with appropriate organisational provision.– C1.3. As this is developed, we will work to ensure current Arts Council music programmes are developed to complement this. |



Photographer: Andrew Wilkinson

This policy and strategy and its implementation plan will be the subject of ongoing annual executive review as part of the Council's annual planning processes.

Implementation progress and development, as well as the developments arising from more detailed strategy and programme responses, will periodically be reported to and reviewed by the Council through its Policy and Strategy committee as part of its ongoing work.

It is envisaged that full evaluation and review and re-casting as required will be conducted in the light of the production of the Council's new overarching policy and strategy due to cover the period from 2026 onwards to replace the current Making Great Art Work.



Photographer: Ruthless Imagery

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