Connect
Create
Change

Leading Collaborative Arts In Ireland
Create Strategy 2020 - 2025
Foreword

Create is the national development agency for collaborative arts with over 30 years’ experience of leading this practice in Ireland. Our work initiates cross-sectoral national and international partnerships which support artists and communities to co-create work of depth, ambition and excellence. Create publishes this strategy at a time of significant global change and in the firm belief that by working together, artists and communities can purposefully explore how collaborative arts engage in distinct, relevant and powerful ways with the urgent social, cultural and political issues of our times.

This strategy provides a framework to support the ecology, resources and relationships that will develop discourse, policy and next practice. Our five strategic goals are designed to increase the reach of collaborative arts, enhance its value and ensure its ongoing sustainability.

Our actions will create key focal points for the sector. A repurposed Resource Library, new Living Archive of Collaborative Arts and enhanced digital capacity will situate Create uniquely as a physical and virtual hub for cross-sectoral learning and exchange. Working collectively with cultural and wider civil society partners, we will support the relational and durational nature of much collaborative practice, through joint initiatives such as the inaugural Triennial for Social and Collaborative Practice. Our role as a thought leader will be reflected in new research initiatives such as an Evaluative Framework and Register for Collaborative Arts.

Our commitment to diversifying the field of practice is central to this strategy, not only as a reflection of a changing Ireland but of the need to take an intersectional approach to our work. So too is advocacy, where cogent arguments for the potential of collaborative arts practice as a unique channel of artistic and cultural enquiry, social inclusion and community solidarity will be made.

We go forward with renewed purpose and rigour working with artists, partners, funders and investors to realise a dynamic and progressive future for collaborative arts.

Deirdre Figueiredo MBE, Chair
Dr. Ailbhe Murphy, Director

Collaborative Arts

Collaborative arts practice involves artists and communities working closely together, often over extended periods of time, to make art. It harnesses the experiences and skills of each person taking part to give meaning and creative expression to what’s important in their lives. By facilitating wider participation, collaborative art expands and diversifies public engagement with the arts, enriching its contribution to society.

Cover image: Collection of stainless steel objects made by Tinsmith James Collins, Traveller Collection, Seamus Nolan, Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane, 2018. Photo: Ros Kavanagh
About Us

Our Vision
Our vision is of a society that values its artists and invests in the active participation of diverse publics in multiple forms of artistic and cultural expression.

Our Mission
To lead the development of collaborative arts practice by enabling artists and communities to create exceptional art together.

Our Values
In our programmes, the delivery of our services, our decision-making, and our organisational behaviour, Create strives to be:

Open: We welcome diverse perspectives that challenge our thinking and enrich our practice

Adaptive: We are responsive in our work; continuously developing to best support the interests and needs of artists and communities in this evolving field

Innovative: We value artistic experimentation and risk-taking and work in a spirit of creative solidarity with artists and communities

Informed: We stay attuned to broader socio-cultural and political developments as they unfold in community contexts and are reflected in artists’ practices

Engaged: We value the richness of cross-sectoral alliances and artistic partnerships, promoting engaged cultural action, critical debate and experiential learning

Our Work
We implement our mission by:

• Leading best and next practice in collaborative arts
• Shaping supports for collaborative artists to develop their practice and realise projects of cultural value and social significance
• Connecting with a range of stakeholders and partners to form a diverse ecology that values and resources collaborative arts
• Engaging in the developmental work necessary to support cultural diversity in collaborative arts
• Conducting research, communication and related actions that connect collaborative practice to policy in an Irish and international context
• Advocating the distinctive cultural value of collaborative arts practice and its significant contribution to artistic, social, and civic life
• Ensuring that Create itself is appropriately and sustainably resourced to secure a work programme of ambition, quality and breadth

“If you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go further go together.”

- Hina Khan, inaugural recipient of the Create and Fire Station Artists’ Studios Cultural Diversity Residency, 2018.

Field Notes: The Inaugural Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice
Strategic Goals

Create’s strategy is informed by the wider societal context in which collaborative arts practice occurs and by the ever-evolving nature of that practice. We have identified five strategic goals to drive our work forward over the next five years.

**Goal One:** Create innovative opportunities and ensure reliable supports for artists and communities to develop and sustain best practice

**Goal Two:** Develop cultural and cross-sectoral partnerships to support greater diversity in the practice and strengthen its capacity for social change

**Goal Three:** Be Ireland’s expert resource, network forum and research engine for cultural, cross-sectoral and international knowledge about collaborative arts

**Goal Four:** Engage a wide range of publics, stakeholders and policy makers in understanding, valuing and supporting collaborative arts

**Goal Five:** Renew our organisational capacity and ensure resilience to deliver this strategy and be a dynamic national development agency for collaborative arts
Goal
1
Create innovative opportunities and ensure reliable supports for artists and communities to develop and sustain best practice

Why this goal?
• We want to support artists to make work of ambition and excellence
• There is a need to secure and extend the impact of this work by making it more sustainable and widespread
• It is important that collaborative art is developed across all artforms
• The nature of much collaborative arts practice as relational (not transactional) and durational (not occasional) needs to be recognised and provided for
• We wish to harness the potential of digital and virtual practices for this field of work
• We want to build on our experience of leading large scale projects abroad to initiate more international opportunities for artists
• The learning from our international work needs to be further harnessed to inform practice in Ireland

Actions to progress this goal
1. Develop programming partnerships with arts and non-arts organisations to extend the range of possibilities for artists and communities to collaborate through initiatives such as the inaugural Triennial for Social and Collaborative Arts 2021 with Heart of Glass
2. Develop targeted programming partnerships with arts organisations to advance collaborative practice across specific artforms and contexts
3. Re-design our own support frameworks and influence partners and funders so that they provide appropriately for the relational (not transactional) and durational (not occasional) nature of much collaborative arts practice
4. Research and develop a set of actions that harness digital technologies and virtual practices to enrich and disseminate collaborative arts work to the benefit of artists and communities across boundaries
5. Engage further in international networks such as the European Commission’s Voices of Culture so that we learn from best and next practice and so enrich policy formation, sectoral development and provision

Measures of this goal being achieved
• New and stronger partnerships with civil society interests that match our strategic priorities
• Collaborative arts more fully embedded as a practice in the performing arts
• Support frameworks that take account of the relational and durational nature of much collaborative practice
• Action research exploring how digital and virtual practices can advance collaborative arts
• Create is well networked internationally and a recognised leader in policy development and best practice in collaborative arts
Goal 2

Develop cultural and cross-sectoral partnerships

to support greater diversity in the practice and strengthen its capacity for social change

Why this goal?

- We want to give priority to the opportunity that the increasing diversity of Irish society represents for collaborative arts
- We recognise the need for an approach to diversity that is intersectional, acknowledging how multiple forms of discrimination (e.g. gender, class, ethnicity) can combine and overlap in the experiences of individuals and minority groups
- We know the developmental possibilities of collaborative arts practice are strengthened by cross-sectoral partnerships
- We want to create more supportive contexts for diverse artists and communities to collaborate
- Our commitment to cultural democracy in action is advanced by working in partnership with civil society organisations

Actions to progress this goal

1. Connect with relevant support organisations to enable collaborative artists from ethnic and other minority groups to access opportunities in Ireland
2. Influence discourse within the arts and wider public discourse through symposia, initiatives such as Learning Labs with Counterpoints Arts, and targeted communications, so as to broaden definitions and deepen understandings of cultural diversity
3. Increase our community and civil society alliances and collaborations to strengthen our programming, research and advocacy work
4. Connect with more geographically dispersed communities through programmes such as the Artist in Community Scheme and our Collaborative Practice Clinics
5. Link actions under this goal with other strategic commitments e.g. our international agenda and the relationship between digital practices and collaborative arts

Measures of this goal being achieved

- Increased participation in the Artist in the Community Scheme by practitioners from minority ethnic and other minority groups as well as artists seeking international protection
- Cultural diversity in collaborative arts is understood beyond questions of ethnicity alone
- Enhanced capacity in Create to work cross-sectorally, including working with community organisations and support groups
- Wider geographical spread of professional development initiatives and capacity-building for diverse collaborative artists and community partners
“Time is the invisible material of relational work.”

- Dr. Susanne Bosch, Artist Researcher, Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme, 2014-18

Learning in Public: TransEuropean Collaborations in Socially Engaged Art
Be Ireland’s expert resource, network forum and research engine for cultural, cross-sectoral and international knowledge about collaborative arts practice

Why this goal?

- As the national development agency we have a responsibility and commitment to provide services and resources to advance learning and understanding about collaborative arts within the cultural sector and across other fields
- We want to better equip collaborative practitioners and community partners to negotiate this practice together
- We want to take advantage of the increased interest from other fields of community and social action in arts-based learning and research
- There is an urgent need for methods of evaluation and assessment that would yield qualitative registers appropriate for collaborative practice

Actions to progress this goal

1. Develop resources for cross-sectoral learning and exchange about collaborative and socially engaged practice through a newly formulated learning programme
2. Develop our Reading Room as a dedicated Resource Library that serves as a dynamic hub for learning and exchange between artists and community and civil society partners
3. Create a Living Archive of Collaborative Arts to function as a unique cultural resource
4. Initiate (action) research partnerships at home and abroad with a focus on the potential of interdisciplinary arts-based research to generate new and more inclusive forms of enquiry
5. Lead the design and development of new modes of evaluation appropriate to the practice and so inform national and international policy development
6. Pilot collaborative learning platforms with a focus on diversity and the digital to support greater engagement in and understanding of collaborative practice

Measures of this goal being achieved

- An extensive and varied learning programme for artists and community practitioners
- The Create Library and the Living Archive of Collaborative Arts are fully operational as resources for the sector
- New alliances with academic partners dedicated to advancing arts-based research in social or inter-disciplinary enquiry
- A new Evaluative Framework and Register for Collaborative Arts, led by Create and developed in partnership with Fire Station Artists’ Studios, Age and Opportunity’s Bealtaine Festival, University of Limerick, Fingal Arts Office and the Irish Museum of Modern Art
- Two significant collaborative learning residencies with key organisations working in the fields of cultural diversity and digital practices respectively
Goal
4

Engage a wide range of publics, stakeholders and policy makers in understanding, valuing and supporting collaborative arts

Why this goal?

• At a time of significant social and cultural change in Ireland, there is a need for expert advocacy for the distinctive role and value of collaborative arts
• We want to broaden the knowledge and deepen the understanding of policy-makers about collaborative arts as a unique channel of cultural enquiry, social inclusion and community solidarity
• There is a need for advocacy to be underpinned by detailed information and expert knowledge about this practice
• We want to engage more diverse publics as audiences, participants and co-creators in collaborative arts

Actions to progress this goal

1. Develop our communications strategy and optimise the use of digital media to improve communications and marketing so we connect more dynamically with diverse publics and multiple stakeholders
2. Refine models of data capture to improve the quantitative and qualitative evidence that underpins our communications, advocacy and audience development strategies
3. Create more accessible forms of describing and analysing collaborative arts
4. Develop models of documentation and dissemination in conjunction with cultural and other partners
5. Use and broaden our international contacts and networks to strengthen the evidence base of our advocacy

Measures of this goal being achieved

• Increased website traffic and use of our digital communication tools
• Broader user profile on digital and social media platforms
• More purposeful data collection methods to inform policy and practice
• Increased audiences for and participation in Create programmes
• Increased range of case studies and research resources underpinning our communications and advocacy
• Acknowledgement of Create as expert on policy, projects and programmes where arts participation, diversity and social justice issues intersect

Artist in the Community Scheme Summer School on Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice, 2019. Photo: Joseph Carr
Goal 5

Renew our organisational capacity and ensure resilience
to deliver this strategy as a dynamic and resilient national development agency for collaborative arts

Why this goal?
• The cultural policy context and collaborative arts practice are in significant transition. This requires Create to renew itself to be effective and resilient in fulfilling our mission
• We understand the need to diversify our funding paths and domains of action to allow us to grow as an organisation and deliver our work across a range of practices and contexts
• We must be ready and flexible to take advantage of opportunities at home and abroad to advance understanding and practice of collaborative arts

Actions to progress this goal
1. Strengthen and diversify our staff by investing in professional development in order to deliver this strategy
2. Broaden and diversify the profile and skillset of our board of directors
3. Pursue a continuous improvement approach investing in resources and services in order to have a fair, inclusive and dynamic work environment, reflective of our values
4. Develop a robust financial strategy that leverages our cross-sectoral alliances and broadens our income streams

Measures of this goal being achieved
• A staff with the skills and experience to deliver the renewed services and programmes that give effect to the strategy
• A board with wider profile and a composition that reflects the goals of this strategy
• All aspects of our governance, staff and resource management, and our relationships with partners and stakeholders are continuously and comprehensively monitored
• Our income profile has altered, reflecting a broader funding base
Art often works between the lines and over time can open up a portal into a place that didn’t exist before. This can be a making space and when you’re working with someone, that space can become somewhere extraordinary.

Mark Storor, artist in residence, St. Helen’s and Heart of Glass

Learning in Public: TransEuropean Collaborations in Socially Engaged Art
Wider Policy Context

As lead agency for collaborative arts, Create operates within the context of several important policy frameworks and actions by the State and the EU in the field of the arts and culture.

Making Great Art Work, the ten-year strategy of the Arts Council, maintains a twin focus on the artist and on public engagement. The definition of the artist includes that of collaborator and emphasises that artists work in a range of contexts, including social settings.

The Arts Council’s Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy seeks to ensure that “artists, audiences, participants and partners from diverse backgrounds have equitable opportunities to engage with and make art.”

Culture 2025, the government’s framework policy, aims to “enrich the lives of everyone through engagement in culture, placing emphasis on increased citizen participation, especially for those currently excluded.”

Creative Ireland, the all-of-government, culture-based programme, organises its work around five pillars, the second of which is “Enabling Creativity in Every Community.”

The European Workplan for Culture 2019 – 2022 sets out to “promote cultural participation, increase the mobility of artists and strengthen international cultural relations.”

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 are an urgent call to action “which recognises that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change.”

Create looks forward to realising this strategy within the context of these significant policy frameworks and developments. We value their shared emphasis on the necessity for publicly funded arts and culture to be characterised by greater access, participation and collaboration.
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