

Strategy

2023 - 2027

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Introduction

The main goal of Ealaín na Gaeltachta is to grow and to develop the arts in the Gaeltacht.

The arts are the cornerstone of a rich and unique culture and practice that thrives in the Gaeltacht areas of Ireland. The Gaeltacht areas are places where the Irish Language is, or used to be, the main spoken language of the majority of the community. The Gaeltacht arts are continuously growing in these areas through a combination of traditional and contemporary influences. These arts are not only influenced by the national arts environment, but also by the international environment. They embody global, social, cultural and economic change and connect with both rural and urban life. They reach communities in and outside the Gaeltacht and they attract audiences from near and afar.

It could be said that the Gaeltacht is on the threshold between two worlds – an in-between place where many lives, languages and cultures collide and wrestle with one another, a place where living tradition and the modern age are integrated. Here, the Irish language – the first official language, whose future is under threat as a community language, and the English language – a language that is globally dominant – coexist with many other languages from all over the globe.

Arts, culture and day-to-day life aren't viewed as separate from one another in the Gaeltacht. The arts and artists are an integral part of everyday life. This is apparent in the spoken word and in oral literature in particular. This context creates something unique and valuable; something that has declined in many other societies and communities throughout the world. The Gaeltacht arts welcome the wealth of diversity, acknowledge the value of creativity and are open to all.

In our support of the Gaeltacht arts, Ealaín na Gaeltachta has developed the arts infrastructure and has strengthened the skills and capacity of arts organisations and Gaeltacht artists. We have raised the level of understanding and awareness of the lively and diverse arts of the Gaeltacht. We believe that Ealaín na Gaeltachta is integral to the cultural, social and economic development of the Gaeltacht.

About Us

Background

Ealaín (na Gaeltachta) Teoranta is a subsidiary of Údarás na Gaeltachta and was established in 1997. It is a strategic, long-term joint venture between Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Arts Council and is focussed on the development of the arts in the Gaeltacht. Ealaín na Gaeltachta is a Private Company Limited by Shares and is managed by an independent board.





Our Mission

To promote the development of the contemporary and traditional arts in the Gaeltacht.

Ealaín na Gaeltachta fulfils Údarás na Gaeltachta's mission by:

“The arts cultivate an inventive and creative image for the Gaeltacht and the Irish language, serving as a bridge to its vibrant life.”

Tomás Ó Síocháin,
Chief Executive Officer at
Údarás na Gaeltachta

- Fostering an arts environment that is productive, vibrant and viable as a support to, and emerging from, a Gaeltacht community that is productive, vibrant and viable
- Providing support to the arts through the medium of the Irish language
- Providing support to Irish language-based arts, and thereby animating, enriching, strengthening and fostering the language and its community of speakers
- Providing support through the medium of the Irish language to those art forms that are not language-based, thereby offering and fostering a range of creative and artistic expression in the Gaeltacht while enlivening the language and the community
- Supporting the arts to take an appropriate place in the Gaeltacht economy
- Supporting artists, organisations, projects and events that celebrate and enliven the unique culture of the Gaeltacht through the traditional and contemporary arts

Ealaín na Gaeltachta fulfils the Arts Council's mission by:

“Languages are not simply translations of each other: expression through our native language carries a unique identity and form that is fundamental to the cultural integrity and well-being of the country. Na Gaeltachtaí are a rich source of the arts in every art form. They serve diverse communities while enriching the arts nationally and internationally.”

Maureen Kennelly,
Director of the Arts Council

- Supporting a unique aspect of the Irish arts, namely the Irish-language arts that emanate from the Irish-speaking Gaeltacht communities
- Serving the Gaeltacht communities through the medium of Irish
- Using local and specialised information, expertise and experience as a basis for strategically supporting the arts in the Gaeltacht
- Offering strategic supports to Gaeltacht artists in order to assist them to be ambitious, to be innovative and to achieve excellence in their work
- Ensuring that the Gaeltacht communities have access to a wide range of experiences of high-quality arts through the medium of the Irish language
- Ensuring that the Gaeltacht arts are bolstered in the unique places, cultures and communities of the Gaeltacht
- Assisting Gaeltacht artists in their development of national and international profiles

How we work

Facilitation

Our approach is anchored by the work of arts facilitators working on the ground in each region. This gives us access to good local knowledge, allows us to see and respond appropriately to development opportunities and enables us to build strong working relationships across the Gaeltacht. This also informs our approach to working with national and international partners for the development and promotion of the Gaeltacht arts.

Strategic Developments

In response to the ongoing learning from our work on the ground, we develop strategic initiatives and interventions, often in partnership with others.

Funding

Our funding schemes are the engine which drive our work. Through these schemes, a viable arts landscape is nurtured and sustained, strategic development is supported and Gaeltacht artists are enabled to grow and flourish.

Advocacy

Our advocacy work raises awareness of the Gaeltacht arts and of the role they play nationally and in the community. Drawing attention to the value of the Gaeltacht arts helps deliver the funding or policy changes that support them. Our advocacy work also helps develop partnerships and collaborations with other organisations in order to support the Gaeltacht arts.





What informed this strategy

The last five years

Our last strategy ran from 2018-2022, with the global context and the arts sector changing considerably during that time.

Goals 2018-2022

1. Secure increased investment in existing Gaeltacht arts infrastructure and organisations:

Our funding schemes were restructured to clearly prioritise building-based arts organisations.

Support to a value of €1,189,000 was approved during 2018-2022 for nine organisations, an increase of €250,000 from the previous five-year period.

2. To increase the supports for Gaeltacht artists:

Bursaries to the value of €1,000,440 were made available to 186 artists during 2018-2022, an increase from €301,500 to 180 artists in the preceding period. The maximum grant was increased from €4,000 to €10,000.

The Arts Development Scheme was opened again in 2019. This supported 269 artists to undertake ambitious projects with a total investment of €581,514 between 2019 and 2022.

The opportunities for Gaeltacht artists were increased and expanded through projects and strategic partnerships, for example residencies at the Centre Culturel Irlandais and gTeic Ghaoth Dobhair, the major international production Óró and the conferences Ceangal Cwlwm and Amárach. Le Chéile.

Goals 2018-2022

3. Supporting the development of cultural leaders and enablers:

24 grants to a value of €257,506 supported cultural leaders and enablers to develop their practices through the Arts Development Scheme.

4. Increase investment in arts for young people:

A programme in the traditional arts for young people throughout the Gaeltacht began in 2019 with the support of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and the Media (€1.6 million between 2019 and 2022).

A pilot programme in Drama for Young People in the Gaeltacht began in 2021, supported by the Department of TCEGSM to the value of €150,000.



5. Facilitating Gaeltacht communities to engage with the arts:

Opportunities for participation in the arts were made available to the public through

- 5 Arts Centres (year-round programmes) (€1,189,000)
- 109 Gaeltacht arts festivals (€479,250)
- 34 initiatives and events funded through the Arts Development Scheme (€324,181)
- 265 initiatives and events funded by the Síol Scheme (€173,000)
- 126 Culture Night events (€88,000)
- 2 major once-off partnership initiatives – Óró and Dath an Dóchais.

Our work engaged with approximately 350K people in 2022 alone, directly engaging with at least 2,534 young people.

We supported organisations, festivals and artists to access new methods of connecting artistically with the community during the COVID period. Our collaborations with TG4 and Creative Ireland gave access to top-class Gaeltacht arts onscreen.

Our training programme empowered organisations, festivals and artists to share information about their events and projects effectively, helping them develop their audiences and communities.

We regularly shared information with the community about arts events and projects in the Gaeltacht.

6. Grow Ealaín na Gaeltachta's organisational capacity:

Our budget has increased from €683,000 in 2017 to €1,800,000 in 2022.

Our team has grown from four full-time members in 2017 to seven full-time and one part-time member in 2022.

Our team has undertaken continuous professional development with training undertaken in equality, diversity and inclusion, leadership and publicity.

7. Advocating for the Gaeltacht arts:

Awareness of the Gaeltacht arts has grown considerably through our social media platforms, through a redesigned monthly newsletter and through a redesigned website.

We participated in national and international campaigns, developments, events and activities in order to establish and increase awareness of the Gaeltacht arts, for example the development of a National Strategy for the Irish Language-Based Arts, membership of the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce - a Special Committee of the Government on Covid-19 Response, the development of relevant policies of the Arts Council, the Ceangal Cwllwm international theatre conference from 2020-2022 and Celtic Neighbours.



Goals 2018-2022

8. Commission research on the Gaeltacht arts and on the impact of Ealaín na Gaeltachta's ongoing investment and support:

We commissioned research to underpin the new youth programme in the traditional arts and a new youth drama programme. Research reviews of both these programmes have also been commissioned.

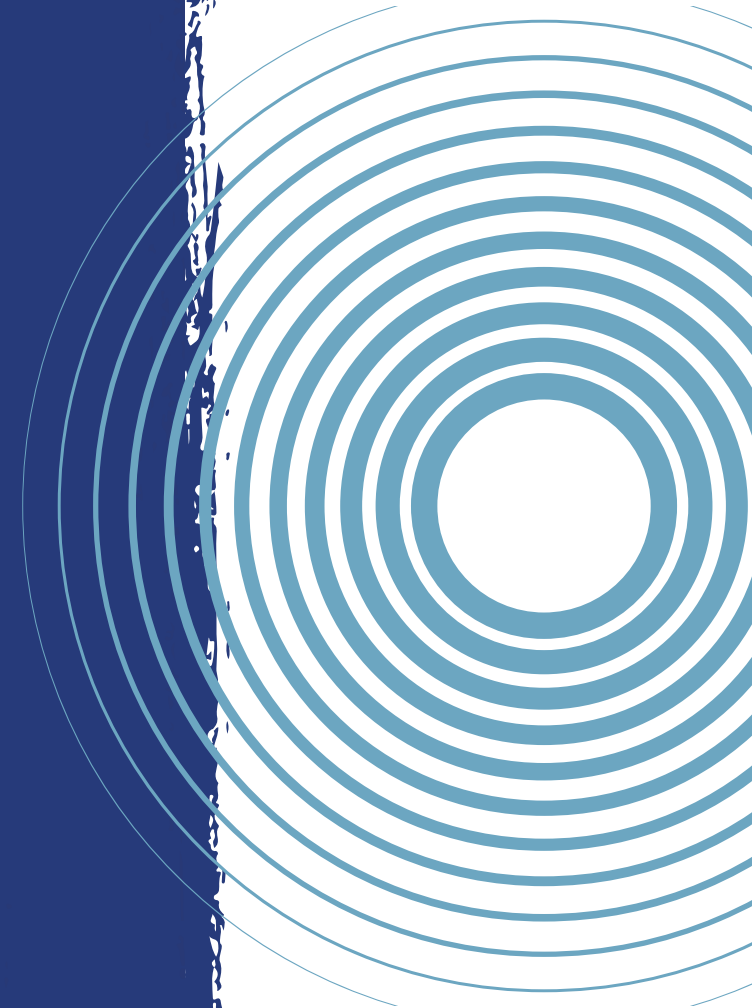
A review on the impact of our 2018-2022 Strategy was commissioned in 2022.

Listening to the sector

As an important part of the development of this strategy, our Board laid out a comprehensive programme to take into account the experience and input of the sector and our national stakeholders in addition to our staff and Board. This programme looked closely at our previous work and systems, the current context, and the vision and aspirations of the sector for the future.

An online survey and questionnaire was circulated to the Gaeltacht community with support from an independent adviser and 136 responses were received. This questionnaire had two sections, one seeking feedback about our systems and work methods, and the other seeking feedback on our strategy and the impacts of our work. After analysing the results of the survey, interviews were held with 26 artists, community groups, arts organisations, and other interested parties.

According to the results of the survey and the results of the interviews, our systems and approach are functioning effectively, but there are certain aspects that we can improve – for example, by making an online application system available. The results of the survey and of the interviews indicate that we should continue with our focus on the needs of the community, and with our mission and strategy - focused on artists, young people, the Gaeltacht arts organisations and on community participation in the arts.



The Current Context

In preparing this new strategy, we considered the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the arts sector, the implications of the climate crisis, the changes to the ways in which people are creating art and attending arts events, and the uncertainties that are stressing economic and political affairs nationally and throughout the world.

We also considered the Arts Council's Strategy Making Great Art Work, Creative Ireland's programme, the Official Languages Act, 2021 and the Strategy for Irish-language based Arts that is to be published shortly by the Department of the Gaeltacht.





Strategic Priorities 2023-2027

Our strategic priorities for 2023-2027 are described under four headings: Community, Artists, Young People and Organisations.

Community

The main community we serve is everyone who lives in the Gaeltacht. This includes all age groups, people who have lived here for a long time and those who have arrived more recently.

Priority: To increase public participation in the arts

Goals

- To provide opportunities to the community to participate in and to have access to the arts, in every Gaeltacht area
- To develop the Gaeltacht arts infrastructure
- To raise awareness of the role and work of Ealaín na Gaeltachta

Results

- An increase in the number of people throughout the Gaeltacht who engage with the arts
- An increase in the number of cultural enablers and leaders in all age groups
- Additional arts spaces and services available to the Gaeltacht community
- A higher profile for the Gaeltacht arts and Gaeltacht artists, as well as for the role and impact of Ealaín na Gaeltachta in the community.

Key Activities

- To develop the support for the Gaeltacht organisations, festivals, initiatives and artists which provide arts events to the community through our funding schemes
- To maintain and grow our partnerships with national organisations and arts initiatives to ensure that their work benefits the Gaeltacht community
- To develop our training programme to support the development of cultural enablers and leaders in the Gaeltacht
- To identify gaps in Gaeltacht arts infrastructure and undertake measures to address them, in partnership with other stakeholders
- To develop our advocacy programme so that the community is informed of the work and supports of Ealaín na Gaeltachta

Artists

Our work is mainly focussed on artists based in the Gaeltacht. In the context of this strategy, we describe an artist as a person who undertakes an activity relating to the creation of art, the practising of art, and/or the conveying of art through the use of creative imagination.

Priority: To support Gaeltacht artists to foster and develop their practices and careers

Goals

- To assist Gaeltacht artists to improve and develop their practices at each stage of their careers
- To support Gaeltacht artists to reach audiences for their work and to succeed in their careers
- To raise the profile of Gaeltacht artists and achieve recognition for their work

Results

- We will be engaging with more Gaeltacht artists
- An increase in the support for new and emerging Gaeltacht artists
- An increase in the range and number of other opportunities and supports accessed by Gaeltacht artists
- A higher profile for Gaeltacht artists and their work locally, nationally and internationally
- The Gaeltacht arts will be recognised as a specific and integral part of the national arts sector

Key Activities

- To support Gaeltacht artists through our funding schemes
- To provide development opportunities to Gaeltacht artists through our training programmes
- To work with Údarás na Gaeltachta in order to provide suitable work spaces and supports to artists
- To enable Gaeltacht artists access additional opportunities and sources of support
- To continue to work with national and international organisations (the Arts Council in particular) to ensure that Gaeltacht artists have equal access to opportunities and supports
- To identify gaps in relation to specific artforms and to work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to address these
- To continue to raise the profile of Gaeltacht artists through our advocacy programme

Young People

Our work focusses on young people who live in the Gaeltacht.



Priority: To support Gaeltacht artists to foster and develop their practices and careers

Goals

- To increase the number and range of opportunities which are available to young people in the Gaeltacht to engage with the arts (as participants and as audiences)
- To support organisations and artists to achieve best practice in their work with young people
- To ensure that the voices of young people are integral in our work and in the work of the organisations we fund
- That our work and approach in relation to young people will be consistent throughout our funding schemes, artform supports and our entire programme of work
- To develop a youth team within Ealaín na Gaeltachta that works across all artforms

Results

- An increase in the number and range of arts activities/events available to young people in the Gaeltacht
- An increase in the number of opportunities and spaces where young people can express their opinions and impact the arts in the Gaeltacht
- Implementation of best practice in relation to young people across our programmes of work.
- An integrated, systematic and transparent funding system in the arts for young people within Ealaín na Gaeltachta

Key Activities

- To continue our programmes of support in the arts for young people, to identify gaps in provision and to carry out measures to address them
- To continue and grow our partnerships with national organisations and arts initiatives to ensure that their work benefits young people in the Gaeltacht
- To continue and grow our training programme in the area of good practice in relation to young people in the arts
- To develop and integrate a model and process of consultation with young people into our organisational structure
- To review and remodel our funding schemes and systems in order to develop more effective supports in the arts for young people

Organisations

Our work with organisations relates principally to organisations located in the Gaeltacht and that support the promotion of the arts in the Gaeltacht. We count Ealaín na Gaeltachta as one of these organisations.

Priority: To strengthen arts infrastructure in the Gaeltacht

Goals

- To grow and develop, on a sustainable basis, the ability, capacity and impact of the Gaeltacht arts organisations
- To improve the capacity of Ealaín na Gaeltachta to meet the needs of the sector effectively
- To strengthen the impact of Ealaín na Gaeltachta in the arts sector in the Gaeltacht, nationally and internationally

Results

- Multi-annual funding is available to Ealaín na Gaeltachta
- Gaeltacht arts organisations are functioning on a sustainable basis and as an integral part of the national arts infrastructure
- Best practice is continuously fostered in the organisations we fund
- We have new and effective systems in place including an online application system
- The results of our monitoring, evaluation and reporting will demonstrate the impact of our investment
- Our Climate Adaptation Strategy is in place and being implemented

Key Activities

- To continue to support arts organisations through our funding schemes
- To support Gaeltacht arts organisations to implement development programmes to provide a sustainable basis for their work
- To develop training programmes to support best practice in the organisations we fund
- To agree multi-annual funding for Ealaín na Gaeltachta with our principal funders, in order to meet the needs of our funded organisations more effectively
- To sustain and develop ongoing working relationships between the staff of Ealaín na Gaeltachta and the staff of the Arts Council in relation to arts and arts development matters
- To develop and implement a Climate Adaptation Strategy for Ealaín na Gaeltachta
- To review and remodel our internal systems to best meet the needs of the sector
- To develop our monitoring and evaluation practices and systems to support our ongoing understanding of the needs of the sector
- To align our data collection models with the Arts Council and the Local Authorities
- To continue to develop the expertise of our team through training, professional development and engagement with the national arts sector
- To promote Ealaín na Gaeltachta as an integral part of the arts sector nationally and develop ongoing relationships with national organisations

How we will implement this strategy

The Board of Ealaín na Gaeltachta will monitor the implementation of this strategy and its associated work plans on an annual basis. Implementation will also be monitored by our principal funders on an annual basis.

We will prioritise the voices and outlooks of artists, the community, young people and the Gaeltacht arts organisations and we will maintain close relationships with our stakeholders in implementing this strategy.



Our Board & Staff

Our Board

Siubhán Nic Grianna
(Údarás na Gaeltachta) - Chairperson

Paddy Glackin
Director

Miriam Ní Néill
(Údarás na Gaeltachta) - Secretary

Lís Ní Dhálaigh
Director

Our Staff

Micheál Ó Fearraigh
Arts Development Executive

Clíodhna Ní Bheaglaoich
Arts Administrator, Munster (Part-time)

Muireann Ní Dhroighneáin
Arts Facilitator, Connacht and Co. Meath

Freda Nic Giolla Chatháin
Youth Arts Development Officer, Cuisle

Beartla Ó Flatharta
Arts Facilitator, Connacht and Co. Meath
(covering a career break)

Aoife Ní Chonghaile
Assistant Youth Arts Officer, Cuisle

Rachel Holstead
Arts Facilitator, Munster

Máire Ní Thuathail
Assistant Youth Arts Officer, Cuisle

Danielle Nic Pháidín
Arts Facilitator, Donegal

Margaret Anne Ní Fhearraigh
Arts Administrator

