



**Rialtas na hÉireann**  
Government of Ireland

## **Spending Review 2018**

# **Implementation of the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of the Arts Council**

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This paper has been prepared by IGEES staff in the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The views presented in this paper do not represent the official views of the Department or the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

# Table of Contents

<b>CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Introduction .....	1
1.2. Overview of the Arts Council .....	1
<b>CHAPTER 2: VALUE FOR MONEY AND POLICY REVIEW .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1. Value for Money and Policy Review .....	3
2.2. Conclusions of the review .....	3
2.3. Summary of Recommendations .....	4
<b>CHAPTER 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1. Implementation Arrangements .....	6
3.2. Implementation Overview – Progress 2016 to 2018 .....	7
3.3. Arts Council Strategy .....	8
3.3.1. Socio-economic value .....	8
3.3.2. Leveraging funding from private, philanthropic and other sources .....	10
3.4. Arts Council – Annual Programme .....	11
3.4.1. Existing commitments and strategic priorities .....	11
3.4.2. Recurring funding.....	13
3.4.3. Once-off and other funding .....	17
3.5. Operation and Governance .....	17
3.6. Data Collection .....	22
3.6.1. Funding Recipients .....	23
3.6.2. Audiences and Population .....	24
3.6.3. Artistic Quality.....	27
3.6.4. Partnerships .....	27
<b>CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1.1. General Comments .....	29
4.1.2. Conclusions linked to specific recommendations.....	30

**BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... I**

**APPENDIX 1: ..... II**

# Summary

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This spending review paper, conducted by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, examined the implementation of the recommendations arising from the 2015 Value for Money and Policy Review of the Arts Council. A primary driver for this review is to ensure meaningful implementation of recommendations arising from Departmental evaluations with a view to embedding implementation, as well as analysis, as part of the Department's approach to evidence-based decision-making.

Over the two and a half year period since the publication of the Value for Money and Policy Review (VFMPR), the Arts Council has made significant progress in implementing the recommendations with 83% of the recommendations either fully or partially recommended. A critical success factor in achieving this output was the development of the Arts Council's strategy in parallel with the VFMPR which ensured that recommendations were embedded into the strategic orientation of the organisation for the coming years. The Arts Council also reorganised its structure to facilitate implementation as well as appointing a specific staff member to oversee delivery.

Although the review of the implementation has been largely positive, a number of areas were identified where further implementation work should be considered by the Arts Council:

- There is an ongoing need to manage administration costs to ensure the Arts Council remains resilient in the face of future economic downturn;
- The Arts Council should ensure that the full set of performance indicators recommended by the VFMPR is in use and is published;
- While the Arts Council has significantly enhanced its collection of data, it should move to the next stage of analysis and publication as soon as possible. Enhancements to its IT system should be considered in this regard.
- The international literature on evaluating value and quality of arts investment should be maintained under review and the Arts Council should continue to explore partnerships for research including with enterprise agencies.

Some additional recommendations related to particular areas within the Arts Council's annual programme are included in the main text of the report.

# Chapter 1: Overview

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## 1.1. Introduction

This paper is presented as part of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's contribution to the 2018 Spending Review process. An important objective of the 2018 process is to build on analysis undertaken in previous years and examine the next phase of current expenditure. The guidance on the 2018 spending review process also noted that a central focus of the review is to determine if existing policies and programmes are delivering on their stated objectives in an efficient and effective manner. The Arts Council represents a key programme within the Department's Vote, accounting for 27.78% of all current expenditure in 2018 and 49.37% of all current expenditure within the Department's cultural budget. Given this, and the recent trend towards increasing the annual grant to the Arts Council (+4.4% in 2018), it was considered timely to review the progress made by the Council in implementing the recommendations in the value for money and policy review of the Arts Council (VFMPR), published in September 2015 to ensure the continued efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation and the State's investment in supporting artists and arts organisations.

The VFMPR of the Arts Council examined the income streams, operation and outputs of the Arts Council over the years 2009 to 2012. It was interesting in that it is one of the only such reviews to examine all aspects of an agency's work, including its governance, structures and staffing, rather than focusing on a particular project or programme area. The review made a broad range of recommendations relating to the Arts Council's strategic planning and orientation, its operational arrangements and for the enhancement of its performance management and data collection arrangements. It is considered essential that a thorough review of their implementation is undertaken to ensure that the necessary enhancements to the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation have been implemented. Additionally, it is noted that this examination is being conducted 2.5 years after the publication of the review, a useful mid-point review in the five year interval between periodic critical reviews of agencies required under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

## 1.2. Overview of the Arts Council

The Arts Council is a statutory agency, operating under the Arts Act 2003, with responsibility for promoting and developing the arts in Ireland. Delivery of this overarching objective is usually through the provision of financial and other supports to artists and arts organisations and by acting as an advocate for the arts including through the provision of advice to the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, to Government and to other public bodies, as required. The Arts Council has a chair and twelve members, each of whom is appointed by the Minister for a term of five years. The Council oversees the work of an Executive, headed by a Director. The Arts Act 2003 specifically provides that the Arts Council is independent in its funding decisions. The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (the Department) does not involve itself in the day to day operations of the Council's work. The Department does, however, have responsibility for setting the overall policy framework for the Arts Council's operation and for providing the necessary funding for it to undertake its work. Arts Council funding is provided from the Department's voted expenditure and

represents a significant proportion of the Department's current funding provision. Table 1.1 sets out the annual current allocation for the Arts Council for the past 10 years:

**Table 1.1 Annual Arts Council Funding (2009-2018)**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Current Voted Expenditure</b>	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000
<b>Arts Council</b>	72,350	68,149	64,963	63,100	60,504	56,800	58,800	60,027	65,057	67,920
<b>% Annual Change</b>		-	-	-	-	-	3.52%	2.09%	8.38%	4.40%
		5.81%	4.68%	2.87%	4.11%	6.12%				

Over the period, the Arts Council has experienced a significant decrease in its annual current funding allocation. However, there has been a sustained recovery in resource provision since 2015, of 19.6% since 2014. This is linked to general economic recovery.

The Arts Council's administrative costs, including salaries, have also been affected by the challenging economic climate of the late noughties, and the Council's efforts at managing these were particularly recognised in the value for money and policy review. Table 1.2 sets out the administration costs of the Council and as a percentage of the total voted expenditure of the Council over the last number of years:

**Table 1.2 Annual Arts Council Funding – Administration Costs (2009-2018)**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000	€,000
<b>Arts Council</b>	72,350	68,149	64,963	63,100	60,504	56,800	58,800	60,027	65,057	67,920
<b>Administration Costs</b>	6,883	6,180	5,615	5,522	5,254	5,108	5,607	5,821	6,300	7,000
<b>% of Total Voted Funding</b>	9.62%	9.07%	8.66%	8.88%	8.68%	8.99%	9.54%	9.70%	9.68%	10.31%

It is noted from the table that the Arts Council has maintained its administration costs at below 10% for all but 2018 when it expects its costs to increase to €7 million or 10.31% of its total voted allocation. This has been part of a sustained increase in administration costs since 2014, over which period, the Council has seen costs increase to beyond 2009 levels. While this is understandable in the context of the additional work generated by the implementation of its 10-year strategy and the additional grants to be delivered as its allocation increases, it is a trend that should be kept under review to ensure that the Council remains resilient to future financial shocks and can respond flexibly to such changes without the burden of a too large administration.

## Chapter 2: Value for Money and Policy Review

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### 2.1. Value for Money and Policy Review

In 2012, Government approved the inclusion of a review of the Arts Council over the period 2009 to 2012, as part of its approved programme of value for money and policy reviews. The review commenced in September 2013 and was overseen by a steering committee with representatives from the Department, the Arts Council, the Departments of Public Expenditure and Reform, Foreign Affairs and Trade and Justice and Equality. The committee was chaired by Professor John O'Hagan, then Professor of Economics at Trinity College.

The review followed the typical Value for Money and Policy Review structure:

- It identified the Arts Council's objectives and tests them for consistency with Departmental and Government policy;
- It assessed the economy and efficiency of the Arts Council in terms of its own running costs as well as the delivery of its annual programme of supports;
- It examined the effectiveness of the Arts Council in achieving its objectives and societal outcomes; and
- It made recommendations on the future operation of the Arts Council.

In addition, the review proposed a set of performance indicators as part of the agreed terms of reference.

The VRMPR used a programme logic model as the framework for the evaluation, assessing the relevance of the following objectives for the organisation as well as analysing its inputs, activities and outputs:

- To provide support to artists and arts organisations;
- To improve access to and participation in the arts across all communities;
- To provide advice to Government, policy makers and other stakeholders and to act as a public advocate for the arts; and
- To improve the operational effectiveness of the Arts Council.

### 2.2. Conclusions of the review

The review concluded that the Arts Council had, in general, performed well over a period of financial constraint and was able to demonstrate that it had achieved its stated strategic objectives and had demonstrated efficiency in its operations. The review also recognised the efforts taken by the Arts Council in reducing its administration costs and staff numbers, during a period of significant contraction in its annual grant, and in reorganising its work to minimise disruption to its programme, as a result. Its efforts in using its IT system to automate parts of its grants programme as well as initiatives to leverage its funding against other public, private and philanthropic funding e.g. the RAISE initiative, were welcomed in the report.

The following specific conclusions were noted in the report:

- The funding reductions during the financial crisis had not served to fully erode the benefits of the increased funding to the Arts Council during the boom years;

- The Arts Council had been proactive in seeking to maximise the value of the available public funding by leveraging it against other public, private and philanthropic funding. In particular, it has strengthened its collaboration with local authorities and had introduced the RAISE initiative to build capacity in arts organisations to secure private and philanthropic funding for their endeavours;
- The Arts Council had actively reduced its administration costs to maximise the availability of funding for its annual programme;
- In reviewing its decision-making processes, the Arts Council was found to be compliant with governance requirements and had made a number of improvements in the application process through the online system and using peer panels. The review identified some areas where the process could be enhanced to ensure it is as objective and transparent as possible e.g. through using a scoring mechanism on all assessments and ensuring all schemes are operated on an open basis.
- The Arts Council was found to have operated its programme efficiently in a difficult financial climate. This was largely achieved by applying smaller funding cuts across the whole grants programme rather than significantly decreasing funding in any particular area.
- The review identified opportunities to improve the delivery of the programme, in particular in relation to improving the diversity of organisations supported and in encouraging arts organisations to be more financially sustainable.
- The review specifically recognised the need to introduce a performance management system to ensure the outputs and outcomes of the State's investment are measured and analysed. In particular it recommends a set of performance indicators and highlights the need to establish an evidence base on societal outcomes of the arts.

### **2.3. Summary of Recommendations**

The review also included a range of recommendations encompassing the objectives of the Arts Council, its governance, its activities and outputs, and in relation to better data-collection and analysis. The recommendations identified in the earlier chapters fall into four broad categories: Arts Council's strategy, its annual programme, governance and data-collection and analysis. The full set of recommendations is provided at appendix 1, however a summary of the recommendations is provided below:

- Improving the diversity of organisations receiving recurring funding, especially under the regularly funded organisations and annual funding schemes for example by setting aside a proportion of available funding for "new" organisations which demonstrate the potential to become nationally significant or significant within an art form.
- The Arts Council should improve transparency by operating all funding schemes on an open application basis and by applying a scoring mechanism to all assessments. Details of scores should be made available to applicants and other interested parties.
- The Arts Council should consider options to record and raise awareness of the work of Aosdána members in receipt of the Cnuas. The Arts Council should also examine the means at its disposal to manage the total funding for the Cnuas including for example the setting of caps on the level of total funding available or varying the level of the Cnuas annually.
- Avoiding an over-dependence on core funding provided through the regularly funded organisations and annual funding schemes by providing funding to organisations on the

basis of multi-annual agreements for specific programmes of work or as an investment in the organisation's capacity to generate alternate sources of income.

- The Arts Council should actively explore the opportunities to expand the RAISE initiative. The review recommends the establishment of a set of 11 performance indicators, linked to the objectives of the Arts Council, to assess the results of the Arts Council's annual programme.

## Chapter 3: Implementation of the Recommendations

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### 3.1. Implementation Arrangements

There are two strands to the implementation and oversight of the implementation of the recommendations of the review of the Arts Council. In the first instance, there is the Arts Council's own internal process, discussed in the following paragraph and linked to the implementation of its strategy, and in the second, there is the Department's oversight of the implementation process.

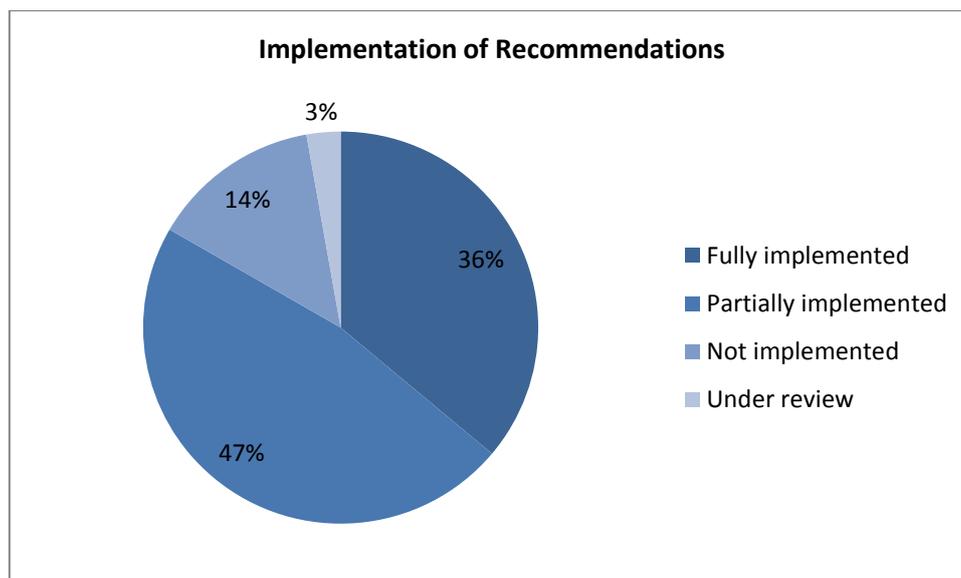
In terms of the Arts Council's responsibility for implementation, the review highlighted the 10-year strategy for the Arts Council – *Making Great Art Work* – as an important vehicle for the implementation of its recommendations. The strategy, developed in parallel with the review, incorporated many of the core principles of the review, particularly in relation to enhancing the evidence-base for the outputs and outcomes of the work of the Arts Council, developing the capacity of the Council and the sector to perform better, and in ensuring the strategic management of its investment programme. It was envisaged that this high-level strategy would be followed by a series of 3-year implementation plans each of which would include many of the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review. The first of three 3-year plans was published in 2017 and was followed by the publication of an annual investment plan (2017, 2018) and a new funding framework (2018). These documents are used as source documents for much of the analysis contained within this spending review paper. It is noted that the Arts Council intends to conduct a mid-cycle review of the implementation of its 3-year plan in the coming months. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of a specific section on the findings of this paper and the overall implementation of the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy review as part of that process.

The Department separately had its own process for reviewing the implementation of the recommendations of the review as part of its own performance. This was done through the Department's annual quality assurance process (QAP) under the public spending code, which includes value for money and policy reviews. As part of the QAP, the Department has sought updates on activity in relation to the implementation of each recommendation for each year since 2016. These updates were reviewed by the Culture Division, which has responsibility for the Arts Council as well as by the Department's evaluation unit which prepares the overall QAP report. Follow up actions are addressed to the Arts Council within the context of the Department's formal engagement with the Council e.g. quarterly liaison meetings, as well as through informal channels. Using the annual QAP as the vehicle for oversight of the implementation of the review's recommendations is considered to be a particularly useful approach as it ensures an annual review of implementation as well as linking implementation to Departmental as well as Arts Council performance. Further consideration could be given to including a specific section in the annual performance delivery agreement on the implementation of the review's recommendations, particularly as they relate to the use of the performance indicator set, to bolster this approach of joint responsibility for implementation of the review.

### 3.2. Implementation Overview – Progress 2016 to 2018

Since the publication of the Value for Money and Policy Review of the Arts Council in September 2015, the Council has demonstrated significant commitment to and progress on the implementation of the review’s 36 recommendations. Over that period, the Arts Council has fully implemented 36% of the review’s recommendations (13) with a further 47% of recommendations either in progress or partially implemented (17). Just 14% of recommendations have not been implemented (5) with a further recommendation considered to require review for relevance following this spending review paper. Chart 3.1 sets out this breakdown of implementation.

**Chart 3.1 Implementation of Recommendations – 2016-2018**

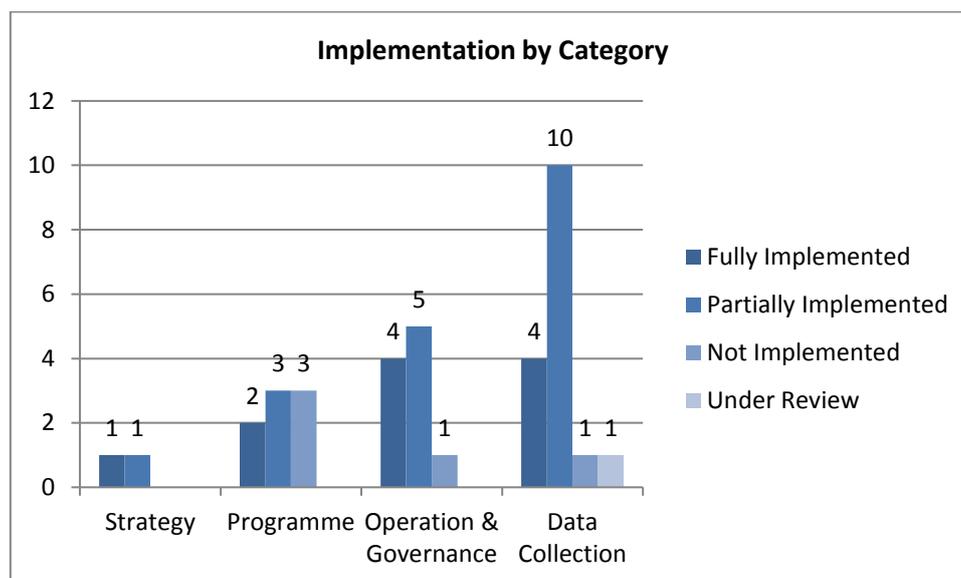


The recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review were also divided into four categories, as follows:

- Arts Council Strategy – 2 recommendations (6%);
- Annual Programme – 8 recommendations (22%);
- Operation and Governance – 10 recommendations (28%); and
- Data collection and analysis – 16 recommendations (44%).

Chart 3.2 provides an overview of the implementation of recommendations by category and by level of implementation. From the chart, it is clear that data collection, which had the highest number of recommendations (16), also saw the greatest level of full and partial implementation of those recommendations, followed by recommendations in the area of operation and governance. Programme recommendations saw the highest number of recommendations not implemented (3), although it should be noted that 62.5% (5) of recommendations in this area were either fully or partially implemented.

**Chart 3.2 Implementation of Recommendations by Category – 2016-2018**



The following sections (3.3 to 3.6) examine progress on the implementation of each recommendation over the period 2016 to 2018, as well as providing commentary, where possible, on the qualitative aspects of that implementation.

### 3.3. Arts Council Strategy

Two recommendations were identified which related to the Arts Council’s Strategy as follows:

- The Arts Council to consider the need to maximise the socio-economic value of the arts as part of the development of the goals and objectives for its new strategy:
- The Arts Council to consider the need to continue to explore opportunities to generate funding for the arts from private, philanthropic and other sources as part of the development of the goals and objectives for its new strategy.

#### 3.3.1. *Socio-economic value*

In terms of the first recommendation, whereby the Arts Council would incorporate the need to maximise the socio-economic value of the arts in its goals and objectives of its strategy *Making Great Art Work*, the Arts Council has not explicitly included this within its goals and objectives. It has, however, included a range of relevant actions aligned with this recommendation and in support of the delivery of its goals and objectives set out in table 3.1.

**Table 3.1** Extracts from *Making Great Art Work*

Goal	Actions to Achieve the Goal	Measures of Achievement	Supporting actions
<p>Delivering Capacity - The Arts Council and the arts sector have the knowledge skills and inventiveness to realise this strategy</p>	<p>The Arts Council will become more engaged in actively championing the distinctive value and importance of the arts.</p>	<p>The Arts Council will be more visibly active in promoting the arts and in advocating their social value and economic benefit.</p>	<p>ACI will ensure that it is well-informed on the intersections of its work with key social and economic fields.</p> <p>ACI will develop a strategy to address its statutory function to promote the arts and to demonstrate its distinctive value across a range of measures: cultural, social and economic.</p> <p>ACI will underline the importance and increasing impact of the arts on the creative industries, enterprise, cultural tourism, foreign direct investment and other key aspects of the Irish economy.</p>

In its 3-year plan, the first in a series of implementation plans for *Making Great Art Work*, the Arts Council further elaborated on its plans to implement this goal and associated actions/supporting actions in table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Actions contained in the 3-Year Implementation Plan**

Action	Update May 2018
In 2017 implement a promotional campaign in partnership with the sector on the intrinsic and societal impact of the arts in Irish life.	Due to budgetary constraints, this hasn't been progressed; however, it remains under review for inclusion in future years' programmes.
Support artist and arts organisations to collect and share better information about the impact and value of their work.	The Arts Council has specifically designed a social impact study for one of its funding programmes, in collaboration with local authorities.

Table 3.2 also provides an update on the implementation of these actions which are currently being reviewed by the Arts Council as part of its own internal review process.

Although the Arts Council has considered this recommendation, and has incorporated elements of it within its 10-year strategy, it is considered that there is a greater focus on demonstrating the social value of the arts rather than equally emphasising the social and economic importance of the arts within its 3-year implementation plan. However, given that this is the first in a series of implementation plans, it is considered that this perceived imbalance could be addressed by its commitment to develop a strategy to *promote the arts and to demonstrate its distinctive value across a range of measures: cultural, social and economic*. As the Arts Council is currently reviewing its progress in implementing its first 3-year plan, it is considered timely to review the opportunities for including this action at an earlier stage in the implementation of *Making Great Art Work*.

**Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented**

### 3.3.2. *Leveraging funding from private, philanthropic and other sources*

In developing its response to the review recommendation to *continue to explore opportunities to generate funding for the arts from private, philanthropic and other sources*, the Arts Council has advised that it has extended the RAISE programme (which supports arts organisations in generating private and philanthropic funding) for a further three years from 2017 to 2019. In addition, it advised that from 2017 it had engaged a Private Investment Adviser and had developed a strategy to support arts organisations to generate private investment for the following three year period. While these two actions demonstrate the full implementation of this action, it was not possible to assess the qualitative aspects of the work i.e. how well the action was implemented. In this regard, it is noted that the Arts Council no longer (since 2016) publishes its annual report on private investment generated by Irish arts organisations. It would be useful if the data contained in these reports could continue to be analysed with a view to measuring the impact of the Arts Council's work in this area over time.

**Conclusion: Recommendation fully implemented**

### **3.4. Arts Council – Annual Programme**

The review included a range of recommendations relating to the constitution, operation and orientation of the Arts Council’s annual grant funding programme. These conclusions were grouped under the following headings:

- Recommendations relating to existing funding commitments and strategic priorities;
- Grant schemes which provide recurring funding to artists and arts organisations; and
- Grant schemes and initiatives which provide once-off funding to artists and arts organisations.

#### **3.4.1. *Existing commitments and strategic priorities***

The review considered two of the Arts Council’s grant schemes in this category; the Cnuas and the Touring and Dissemination of Work Scheme. Together, these elements accounted for 7.96% of total Arts Council expenditure on its grant programme (€53.709 million) in 2016.

The Cnuas is a means-tested annual stipend, exempted from income tax, provided to Aosdána members with the objective of honouring and supporting individual artists who would otherwise not be able to earn a living from their artistic work. Membership of Aosdána is by peer nomination and election and is limited to 250 living artists. The annual stipend is capped at €17,180 and members must earn less than €25,770 per annum in order to qualify for the payment. All eligible members are entitled to receive this stipend resulting in the scheme being ‘demand led’. Following the analysis in the review, it was recommended that the Arts Council examine the means at its disposal to manage the total funding in light of the risks to its funding of having such a ‘demand led’ scheme including for example the setting of caps on the level of total funding available or varying the level of the Cnuas annually. Although the ‘demand led’ nature of the scheme remains unaddressed, the total cost of the scheme has not increased significantly since 2012 (the last year of the review analysis) increasing by only €21,530 or 0.8% to €2.65 million in 2016. This may indicate a lower risk of an expanded funding requirement in the short run perhaps in response to an improved economic environment. In response to this recommendation, the Arts Council has advised that it undertook a comprehensive review of Aosdána in 2016 and is currently engaged in discussions with Aosdána on a number of changes to its operation. As part of this process, the Arts Council has advised that it is considering the relationship between the Cnuas and State pension which may offer a means of balancing the ongoing costs/demand for the scheme. In the absence of agreement on changes in the short-term, it is considered that this recommendation has been partially implemented subject to the final agreement between Aosdána and the Arts Council. In addition, the Arts Council has advised that it has received sanction to fill a permanent position for a liaison with Aosdána which should facilitate the continuation of these discussions.

#### ***Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented***

The review also recommended that the Arts Council should consider means of recording the work of Aosdána artists and, in particular, options to raise awareness of the work of Aosdána members in receipt of the Cnuas. In this regard, the Arts Council has required all Aosdána members to complete an annual report on their work. A subset of this information is presented in the Arts Council’s annual report. Although, the collection of these data is useful and does represent the implementation of

the review recommendation, it is noted that a regular analysis of artistic output is necessary to inform Arts Council policy and annual grants programme.

In relation to the intention to consider options to highlight the work of Aosdána members, the Arts Council has, since 2016, included a section in its annual report highlighting the output of a subset of its members. In 2016 (the most recent published annual report), this section highlighted the work of 12 Aosdána members, accounting for 7.5% of its total membership (160). This continues to be at the lower level of highlighting outputs and should be reconsidered for future years' publications. Separately, the Arts Council has been working to highlight this work through online and social media including through its use of twitter (@aosdana) to announce details of members' exhibitions, launches, publications etc. The Council has also developed a new Aosdána website which will be launched shortly.

In addition, it is noted that while the Arts council does provide information on Cnuas recipients at its Aosdána page (<http://aosdana.artscouncil.ie/Cnuas.aspx>), this information does not include details on individual grant payments. The current site includes profiles of Cnuas recipients/Aosdána members but does not highlight the work of these artists on its website. Consideration could be given to enhancing this aspect of its information sharing as part of the new website, particularly, in light of its innovative mapping software allowing users to search grants and grant recipients by location. Although, there certainly have been improvements in the collection of data on Aosdána members' work and efforts to publicise this work through the annual report, it is clear that there is scope to enhance the use of data collected and to present information on outputs in a more user friendly manner. As such, it is considered that this recommendation has been partially implemented.

***Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented***

The Arts Council also operates an annual *Touring and Dissemination of Work Scheme* with the objectives of creating opportunities for audiences throughout the country to access and experience high quality works in theatre, opera, dance and other disciplines. Critically, this scheme facilitates artists to present their work to wider and more diverse audiences. The scheme is opened to applications twice yearly and it saw a significant increase in funding over the period of the review (+376% from €0.32 million in 2009 to €1.5 million in 2012). Following the analysis, the review recommended that the Arts Council consider the potential to raise revenue from touring as a criterion in the assessment of applications.

Since the review, the annual cost of the scheme increased by €0.117 million or 7.78% from €1.51 million in 2012 to €1.624 million in 2016, although it fell back slightly to €1.58 million in 2017. In terms of the implementation of the recommendation, the Arts Council has advised that it now includes this scheme as part of its annual strategic funding agreements with arts organisations, which allows for a more integrated approach to its oversight of the work of arts organisations. In addition, it is in the process of examining potential methodologies for assessing 'return on investment' as part of the overall application process. Although, this demonstrates the Arts Council's commitment to reviewing and enhancing its assessment process as well as the broader oversight of organisations in receipt of Arts Council funding, it is considered that the early stage of

the consideration of potential methodologies to assess 'return on investment' does not constitute the implementation of the recommendation.

***Conclusion: Recommendation not implemented***

### ***3.4.2. Recurring funding***

The Arts Council provides recurring funding i.e. funding over a period of years to a core group of arts organisations with the objective of providing stability within the sector and supporting a critical mass of arts organisations. The review found that, although the funding is provided over a number of years, it must be applied for annually creating an administrative burden for both applicant and Arts Council. In this regard, the review recommended that the Arts Council introduce multi-annual service level agreements, conditional on the availability of funding within the Arts Council's annual grant from the Exchequer. In response to this recommendation, and as part of the delivery of its new funding framework to support *Making Great Art Work*, the Arts Council has introduced two new funding programmes (Arts Grants Funding and Strategic Funding) which include the option of awarding multi-annual funding<sup>1</sup>. On foot of this change, 10 organisations will receive multi-annual funding on a pilot basis over the period 2018 to 2020. The Arts Council has committed to reviewing this provision, with a view to increasing it over time, in the context of balancing these multi-annual commitments with its annual grant from the Exchequer. Although the Arts Council has indicated its intention to increase this element of its funding programme, it is considered that the work to date constitutes the full implementation of the recommendation as the principle of multi-annual funding as well as the operational arrangements have both been established.

***Conclusion: Recommendation fully implemented.***

The review also recommended that the Arts Council consider improving the diversity of organisations receiving recurring funding for example by setting aside a proportion of available funding for "new" organisations which demonstrate the potential to become nationally significant or significant within an art form. This recommendation is considered to be particularly important in light of criticisms of the Arts Council as a 'closed shop' within the sector. In response, the Arts Council has advised that its new funding framework (part of the implementation of its 10-year strategy *Making Great Art Work*) has built in this recommendation. The new funding framework incorporates five funding categories, with distinct purposes and directed at particular types of applicants, linked with the overall objectives of the new strategy. Table 3.3 summarises this new framework which will, over time, replace many of the existing grant schemes and funding initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of Arts Grant Funding – the term limit for the 'multi-annual' funding is from July 2018 to December 2019 subject to certain conditions. Although this is strictly speaking 'multi-annual' it is perhaps less in keeping with the spirit of the recommendation. That said, it is the intention of the Arts Council to include a more meaningful multi-annual element in future rounds of this funding scheme.

**Table 3.3 Funding Framework 2018**

Funding Category	Purpose	Who can apply?
<b>Artists' supports</b>	<p>To support individual artists to develop their ideas and their practice through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Taking time out to concentrate on their artistic practice;</li> <li>- Travelling to learn or to experience work in other countries; or</li> <li>- Availing of a residency opportunity with an organisation or institution.</li> </ul>	Individual artists only.
<b>Project and programme</b>	<p>To provide funding on a competitive basis to support individual, entities or organisations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a specific idea; or</li> <li>- Deliver more than one idea or activity.</li> </ul>	<p>Individual artists.</p> <p>Organisations.</p> <p>Entities that come together for the purpose of delivering a project or programme of work.</p>
<b>Strategic</b>	<p>To provide funding on a competitive basis to support arts organisations with ambitious and imaginative proposals to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assist artists in developing their practice and their ideas; and/or</li> <li>- Deliver excellent arts experiences to the public.</li> </ul>	Organisations that are formally constituted and have a track record for the delivery in the arts.
<b>Partnership</b>	To provide funding to support local authorities in delivering arts experiences to people across Ireland.	Local authority arts offices.
<b>Development</b>	<p>To support a range of activities designed to assist artists and organisations in undertaking developmental activities that enhance participation and stimulate public interest in the arts.</p> <p>There are two types of development funding programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programmes in partnership with third-party organisations;</li> <li>- Programmes managed directly by the Arts Council.</li> </ul>	<p>Development funding is not an open programme.</p> <p>The development funding on offer will change depending on Arts Council priorities and goals. This means that who can apply will also change.</p>

From an initial assessment of the new framework, it appears that for four of the five categories, there is indeed a commitment to open applications for grant schemes, with only the development funding indicating that a more narrow focus will be applied to the identification of likely applicants. In this regard, the Arts Council should avoid the reintroduction of schemes whereby applications are 'by invitation' as this approach was previously criticised in the review with a recommendation that all schemes operate on an open basis (subject to normal qualification criteria). As such, and in recognition of the specific focus of development funding, the Arts Council should consider operating this scheme on the basis of open calls for submissions for particular areas/functions or as pilot projects with defined objectives, timelines and clear sunset clauses which may then be mainstreamed through other grant schemes following evaluation.

To date, the Arts Council has introduced three new schemes under this framework Arts Grant Funding, Strategic Funding and Partnership Funding. Of these, the Arts and Partnership funding operate as open schemes although there is no specific provision for supporting new organisations. The Strategic Funding scheme, however, requires that to be eligible to apply the organisation must have previously received and completed a minimum of three Arts Council awards since January 2011. It specifically references having received funding through recurring funding streams like the Annual Funding (AF), Annual Programming Grant (APG) or Regularly Funded Organisations (RFO), although it invites details of funding through other Arts Council grants. Following a review of the first year's operation of the scheme, this criterion has been removed from future funding rounds.

Although the Arts Council has advised that this recommendation to improve the diversity of organisations receiving recurring funding has been incorporated into its new funding framework model, the available evidence would not support this claim. It may be, however, that the remaining new grant schemes (n=2) under the new framework may address this recommendation, however, in advance of that clarification it is considered that this recommendation has not been implemented.

***Conclusion: Recommendation not implemented.***

The review also recommended that the Arts Council seek to avoid an over-dependence on core funding provided through its RFO and AF schemes by enhancing the resilience of arts organisations. Specifically the report provided that this might be achieved by providing funding on the basis of multi-annual agreements for specific programmes of work rather than the provision of core funding, or that investment might be provided to enhance organisations' capacity to generate alternate sources of income.

As mentioned previously, the Arts Council has primarily introduced multi-annual funding under its new strategic funding programme, however, it will be a number of years before this approach is bedded down and expanded to other areas within its grants programme. In addition, the objectives of the strategic funding scheme do not appear to address this recommendation directly, particularly in terms of enhancing the capacity of organisations to be resilient to changes in Arts Council funding. Rather its focus is on enabling artists to make excellent work and to supporting the delivery of excellent arts experiences to the public. In terms of supporting organisations to enhance their capacity to generate other income, the Arts Council has extended its RAISE programme and has also engaged a Private Investment Adviser to support organisations in broadening their income base.

Although this suggests a partial implementation of the recommendation, it is noted that the actions described by the Arts Council do not address the core element of the recommendation which is to reduce dependence on RFO and AF funding schemes. Table 3.4 shows the change in funding for the RFO and AF schemes between 2012 (the last year of the review analysis) and 2016/2017. Over the period, there has been a reduction of 11.54% in the total funding provided under these two schemes which may indicate some reduction in the dependence on these streams for core funding, however, when considered as a percentage of total grant funding, the levels stay broadly similar between 2012 and 2016 at 56% and 53% respectively. The Arts Council has advised that it considers that this will remain the case into the future as they seek to secure an arts ecosystem and infrastructure, albeit with enhanced capabilities to leverage private and philanthropic funding.

**Table 3.4 Recurring Funding 2012 - 2017**

Funding	2012	2016	2017
Regularly Funded Organisations	€ 20,042,946	€ 18,248,531	RFO discontinued
Annual Funding	€ 11,880,086	€ 10,157,944	€ 28,240,230
<b>Total</b>	€ 31,923,032	€ 28,406,475	€ 28,240,230
<b>% Change</b>			<b>-11.54%</b>

It is also noted that the RFO scheme was discontinued in 2017; however, it appears that the funding previously provided under that scheme has transferred to the AF scheme. A brief analysis of the funding recipients across the two schemes from 2016 to 2017 shows that the top 10 grant recipients for RFO (>€500,000) transferred to AF funding in 2017 and received broadly similar funding provisions under that scheme. As such, it is not clear the extent to which the Arts Council has succeeded in reducing dependence on these schemes and it is suggested that further analysis of the grant recipients over the past years and, in particular, the change in the profile of these recipients is warranted. It is, however, noted that the potential for AF funding to be replaced by strategic funding which is more overtly linked with *Making Great Art Work* strategic priorities, which requires clear and measurable outputs, and which is awarded following a scored assessment process, may address this recommendation over time as the sector's ability to generate other sources of funding is enhanced.

**Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented.**

The review also recommended that the RFO scheme be altered to operate on an open application basis rather than the practice which had been in place of inviting applications from particular organisations. In response, the Arts Council discontinued the RFO scheme at the end of 2016. From the analysis above, it is considered plausible that organisations which would have applied for funding under the RFO are now applying for support through the open procedure in place for the AF scheme. As such, it is considered that this recommendation has been fully implemented.

**Conclusion: Recommendation fully implemented.**

### 3.4.3. *Once-off and other funding*

Allied to the previous review recommendation that dependence on core funding through AF and RFO schemes be reduced, the review was also recommended that the Arts Council take opportunities to increase its support for 'once off' funding schemes and awards. These schemes as a proportion of overall grant funding had increased from 12% in 2009 to 16% in 2012. It was considered that continuing this increase would be of benefit to the Arts Council in enhancing the flexibility of its grant programme to adapt to changes in the Arts Council's operating environment, policy orientation etc. In its recent response, the Arts Council has advised that in 2018, 11% of its investment was for once-off funding. This represents a 5% decrease on 2012 levels and takes the Arts Council back to pre-2009 levels. Although, it may be the Council's intention to keep this recommendation under review as part of its new funding framework, it is not possible to say that this recommendation has been implemented at this stage. The Arts Council has also advised that the size and scope of the arts sector in Ireland also influences the amount of 'once off' funding schemes offered.

*Conclusion: Recommendation not implemented.*

## 3.5. **Operation and Governance**

The review also examined how the Arts Council operated and the governance arrangements in place for its grants programme over the period 2009 to 2012, with a number of recommendations emerging for consideration by the Council. These are discussed, with details of the actions taken in the following section.

In relation to the management of its staff resources, the review recommended that the Council undertake a review of its organisational structure and prepare a revised workforce plan. A key part of this recommendation was that any new structure or workforce plan should be aligned to the Council's new 10-year strategy, *Making Great Art Work* to ensure the structure and plan would remain fit for purpose. In response, the Arts Council has advised that it has completed a review of its organisational structure and functions in summer 2017 from the perspective of the organisation's ability to deliver on *Making Great Art Work*. Specific actions taken include:

- the development of a new investment services department to deliver on the funding framework discussed in the previous section;
- the expansion of the strategic development department to include a greater role in project management and strategic planning across the organisation, as well as undertaking co-ordination functions in relation to strategic priorities under the strategy;
- the balancing of functions across Departments to ensure a more equal workload; and
- the expansion of the role of the finance department to also include governance functions including those related to compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The Arts Council also prepared a revised workforce plan and associated business case aligned to the priorities in the 10-year strategy. Departmental sanction was sought and given for a number of additional posts in 2017 based on these revised documents.

Given these updates, it may be concluded that the Arts Council has fully implemented the recommendation. Although it is outside of the scope of this review to undertake a qualitative analysis of the new organisational structure and workforce plan, the specific actions taken align closely with a number of other recommendations in the review (discussed later in this section) and as such are to be welcomed. Also, the successful application for sanction for additional posts demonstrates Departmental support for the workforce plan.

***Conclusion: Recommendation fully implemented.***

The review also emphasised the importance of maintaining the Arts Council's IT capabilities both in terms of delivering administrative efficiencies, particularly in relation to its grants programme, as well as for data collection, management and analysis. In this area, the Arts Council has undertaken a redesign of its funding processes and IT system with a view to improving the user interface in making applications, increasing the efficiency of internal grants programme processes, and in enhancing the capacity to collect data and report on the outputs and outcomes of its annual investment. The Council has prepared a business case for additional funding to effect this redesign which is recently been submitted to the Department for funding approval. As such, this recommendation is considered to be partially implemented, however, it is noted, that full implementation will require funding support from the Department. The value of a well-functioning IT system, particularly as it relates to performance management and improving the evidence-base for policy and programme decisions, should be included as part of the annual performance delivery agreement.

***Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented.***

The review also examined the Arts Council's corporate governance regime from the perspective that effective corporate governance can encourage efficiency and effective use of scarce public resources, as well as enhancing the transparency of the organisation's funding decisions. A number of specific recommendations were made in this area, as follows:

- In line with the principles established by Circular 13/2014 issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, value for money audits should also be conducted on programme expenditure as well as administration expenditure as part of the internal audit function. In response the Arts Council has indicated that value for money audits and how they are to be undertaken are being examined in the context of an on-going redesign of its funding processes. On this basis, the recommendation has not yet been implemented, however, it is expected that the recommended change in the approach to value for money audits will be effected at the end of this review process.

***Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented.***

- To further improve the transparency with which the Arts Council does its business, consideration should be given to revising a number of provisions in the code of governance framework including the definitions of 'interest' and 'unreasonable advocacy', section 2.8.10 relating to conflicts of interest, and the applications of all provisions relating to conflicts of interest to peer panels. In response to this recommendation, the Arts Council has employed

a specific staff resource to update its code of governance framework and ensure compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. It has also introduced a new process for managing conflicts of interest for all assessment panels and for Arts Council members. It is clear that the Arts Council has enhanced its compliance with the Code of Practice and has improved the transparency of its processes, including through the publication of all conflicts of interest on its website. As such, it is concluded that this recommendation has been fully implemented.

***Conclusion: Recommendation fully implemented.***

As part of the review's consideration of the delivery of the Arts Council's grants programme, a number of recommendations emerged in relation to the assessment of applications for grant funding, the distribution of funding and the balance between grant schemes within the overall programme.

In relation to the assessment of applications, the following recommendations were made:

- Value for money should be included as a specific criterion at each level of the allocation decision-making process.
- A scoring mechanism should be applied to ensure that the allocation of grants and awards is as transparent as possible. Details of scores should be made available to applicants and other interested parties.

In response to this, the Arts Council has indicated that it has introduced a new scoring system on all of its grant schemes – this involves a 0-6 point scale applied to a range of weighted criteria. On the strategic and partnership funding schemes introduced as part of the new funding framework, the same criteria and weightings:

- Track record and/or potential for achievement in the arts (30%);
- Artform development (20%);
- Public and/or artist engagement (20%);
- Operating model, partnerships and resources (15%); and
- Arts Council strategic consideration (15%).

Although there is no specific criterion for value for money, considerations around the effective management of organisational resources, maximising public funding by leveraging additional income from commercial endeavours, sponsorship etc., and efficiency in the procurement and management of resources are included in the descriptions of the criteria provided to applicants. The relevant criterion (operating model, partnerships and resources) does, however, have a relatively low weighting with value for money as only one element of the overall consideration which may warrant further consideration as part of the review of the first year's operation of the scoring model. It is noted too that the Arts Council is also working to develop a tool to assess 'return on investment' as part of future assessment processes. Additionally, for its strategic funding organisations receive details of scores receive as well as a narrative as to why a particular score was assigned as part of the feedback from the decision-making process.

On the basis of the information provided, it is clear that the Arts Council have made significant efforts in developing and introducing a new and more transparent system for assessing grant applications. It is also noted that the Council consider this to be an evolving process with more schemes being included in future years (under the new funding framework) and the inclusion of further enhancements of the assessment process itself following its review of each year's operation. In this regard, consideration could be given to the provision of explanatory text on scoring to all applicants when sought rather than limiting this to a single scheme. Such text should be part of the assessment process as a matter of course. The need for a specific criterion on value for money should be kept under review in the context of the return on investment criterion and the existing assessment of efficient use of resources among applicants.

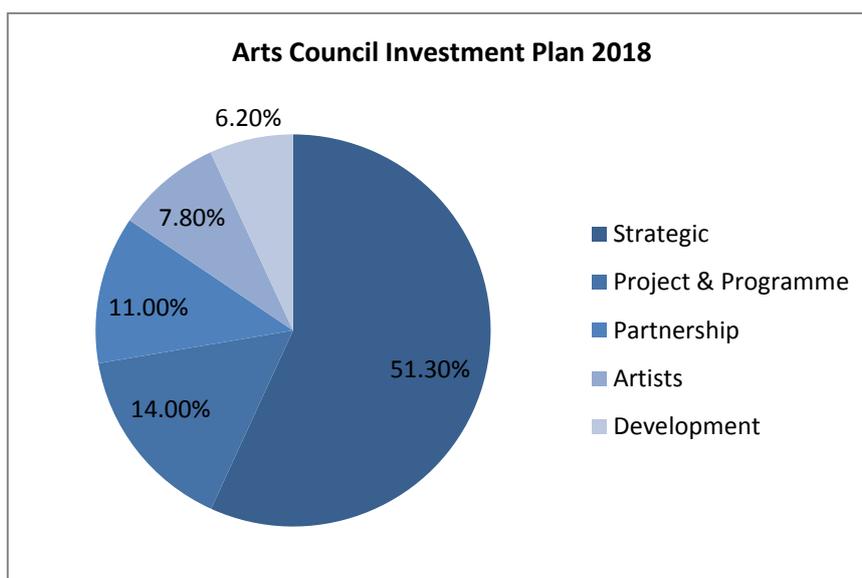
***Conclusion: Two recommendations partially implemented.***

In the context of the overall management of the grant programme and distribution of funding between grant schemes within the programme, the following recommendations were made as part of the review:

- To minimise the administrative burden of operating a large number of schemes, consideration could be given to the grouping of similar schemes and awards within a single application process.
- As allocations for each funding stream are agreed as part of the overall budget for each arts area, the total funding available for each arts area under each scheme should be published.
- To increase the availability of funding for new initiatives, allocations might be made on the basis of a proportion of the previous year's allocation (rather than the whole allocation adjusted proportionally to reflect any change in the total funding for the current year).

In response to these recommendations, the Arts Council has referred to its new funding framework (whereby a number of schemes are in the process of being collapsed into five general schemes described in table 3.3) and its annual investment plans. These plans are published annually (since 2017) and provide details of the Arts Council's investment priorities for the year, including research and review activities linked to areas of investment, as well as a breakdown of the available funding within five investment areas: Artists' supports, Project and Programme, Strategic, Partnership including venues, and Development. Chart 3.3 provides the percentage breakdown between these areas under its 2018 plan. It should be noted that the chart excludes the Arts Council's administrative spend which was previously discussed in chapter 2 of this review paper.

**Chart 3.3 Breakdown of Programme Expenditure 2018**



From the information provided, it is clear that the Arts Council is currently in the process of streamlining their grants programme within the five areas identified in the new funding framework which, when fully in place should represent a significantly more efficient administration of their annual funding programme. As such, it is concluded that this recommendation (bullet number one on the previous page) has been fully implemented with the actions taken being particularly welcome as positively contributing to the future efficiency of the organisation.

***Conclusion: Recommendation fully implemented.***

In addition, in relation to the second bullet point on the previous page, the Arts Council has improved its overall transparency by publishing the breakdown of funding between its priority investment areas as part of its annual investment plan (since 2017). It is also noted that at the level of individual grant schemes and grants, the Arts Council makes public all awards through its website with a further innovation in presenting searchable information by location (GIS mapping). Both of these actions have demonstrated the implementation of the recommendation to publish details of the available funding by priority area, although not by arts area/art form as intended in the review. That said, it is recognised that this slightly different approach allows the Arts Council greater flexibility to respond to changing priorities within its annual programme e.g. its recent focus on investing in children and youth and its alignment with elements of the Creative Ireland programme. On this basis, it is concluded that the Arts Council has partially implemented this recommendation and should maintain the recommendation under review, particularly in relation to stakeholder requests for the information to be provided by arts area/art form.

***Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented.***

In terms of the recommendation *to increase the availability of funding for new initiatives, allocations might be made on the basis of a proportion of the previous year's allocation* (bullet point number 3), the Arts Council has advised that this is being addressed as part of the new annual investment plans.

It is not clear from the information provided how this is to be achieved as the investment plans sets out the headline funding in each area and the broad categories have been changed for 2018 in response to the introduction of the new funding framework. It may be that, as the new funding framework is implemented this recommendation may be adopted, however, at this stage, it is concluded that it has not been implemented. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that the funding set aside for once-off initiatives, discussed in section 3.3.3, has not increased since the publication of the review. It was envisaged in the review that a rebalancing of funding between recurring funding streams and once-off initiatives was desirable to build flexibility into the overall programme, allowing a more dynamic response by the Council to changing priorities. The Arts Council has advised that it considers the balance between core and once of funding streams to be working well, given the need to ensure an arts sector ecology and infrastructure as well as given the finite scope for individual artists and arts organisations to deliver on once off grant initiatives. It notes that its Next Generation Scheme will offer opportunities for new applicants. It will be important to maintain this under review with a view to assessing the implementation of the recommendation and also the continued relevance of the recommendation.

***Conclusion: Recommendation not implemented.***

A final recommendation on matters relating to the operation and governance of the Arts Council's programme, recommended that the Arts Council maintain under review the potential for organisations to receive multiple awards and to consider taking these multiple awards into account as part of the application process for all funding streams. In response to this recommendation, the Arts Council has advised that under its new funding framework, organisations which receive strategic funding (accounting for over 50% of all available funding) are precluded for applying for funding through the other grant schemes, with the exception of the 'open call' competition. In this regard, it is considered that this recommendation has been fully implemented, going beyond the recommended review to addressing the core issue.

***Conclusion: Recommendation fully implemented.***

### **3.6. Data Collection**

The review made a number of recommendations for the Arts Council to enhance its data collection protocols to enhance its ability to analyse the outputs and outcomes of its annual investment programme. In broad terms, the recommendations were grouped as follows:

- Recommendations relating to the existing data collection on funding recipients;
- Recommendations for enhanced data collection among audiences and the general population;
- Recommendations relating to the qualitative aspects of its investment programme including artistic quality; and
- Recommendations around establishing partnerships to enhance the evidence-base around the value of the arts and culture.

The main modes of data collection explored in the review were the routine data collection on applicants and funding recipients (through the Arts Council's IT system) and the Arts Council module

on arts participation and attitudes to the arts within a wider, nationally representative, omnibus survey.

### 3.6.1. *Funding Recipients*

The Arts Council, at the time of the review, had in place a system of collecting data from funding applicants and recipients, however the review recommended that this data source be expanded to collect a broader range of information and that this information would be analysed to inform decision-making around the Council's strategic priorities and annual programme. A number of specific recommendations were made:

- The review recommended that the Arts Council introduce a performance management/monitoring system for major expenditure decisions to ensure that value for money is achieved. It was envisaged that this system should build on the existing Arts Council data collection system (linked to grants and awards) with an expanded set of data collected to enable the evaluation of individual grants (relative to targets) and schemes (relative to the Arts Council's objectives). In this regard, the Arts Council has advised that this process is now being built into its funding systems from 2018. More detail on the data collected is presented in the following updates on individual recommendations. It is noted that the Arts Council's business case for additional investment in its IT system is closely linked with the implementation of this recommendation.

*Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented.*

- The review recommended that the collection of the data from the previous recommendation should provide the basis for 8 of the performance indicators set out in Chapter 6 of the Value for Money and Policy Review. In response, the Arts Council has advised that it is using this performance indicator set as part of its new funding framework to facilitate the capture of data from applicants and funding recipients. Although this is a welcome development, it is considered that a more routine analysis and publication of findings in relation to these data and, in particular, an annual publication around the performance indicators would greatly contribute to the implementation of this recommendation. It is noted that the Arts Council is also enhancing its agreements with individual local authorities to include more data collection and analysis with a view to informing regional and local planning activities as well as contributing to a national overview of arts provision. Although both of these activities are welcomed, the absence of a regular analysis or published report on the indicators leads to the conclusion that this recommendation is partially rather than fully implemented. The Arts Council has advised that it needs to consider how best to progress this aspect of the recommendation with its initial focus on ensuring good quality data collection methodologies and buy-in from funding recipients/stakeholders.

*Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented.*

- The review recommended that output data should be used to facilitate the annual tracking of the Arts Council's progress against agreed priorities and actions in the Service Level Agreement with the Department. In order to ensure the efficacy of such a progress report –

targets and priorities should be clearly defined and agreed each year. As part of its response to this recommendation, the Arts Council has advised that output data are used as part of the performance indicator section in its annual performance delivery agreement with the Department. It is noted that the 2016 service level agreement did not include specific or measurable outputs, but that the 2017 performance delivery agreement did include outputs linked to the Arts Council's 3-year implementation plan. In general, it is considered that there is scope to enhance the use of the performance delivery agreement to include a number of key performance indicators/output metrics, which meet SMART criteria, and against which targets can be set. From the Department's perspective, there should be scope to align such metrics to Departmental as well as Arts Council priorities. Although there is some evidence of activity in this area (from 2017 onwards), it is clear that there is scope to substantially enhance the implementation of this recommendation and consideration should be given to the inclusion of the performance indicator set (from Chapter 6 of the review and referred to in the previous recommendation) as part of the 2019 performance delivery agreement. This would have the additional advantage of not creating additional administrative burden as the Arts Council has advised that these performance indicators are already in use by the Council.

***Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented.***

- The review recommended that the Arts Council consider how the outputs of its annual programme can be used to enhance the opportunities for people in all counties to access and participate in the arts. In this regard, the Council has advised that it has introduced arts activity reporting as a condition of funding for all grant recipients from 2018. The types of data collected include programme information, art form/practice categories, target audience, audience/participation figures and venues. These data will be used to evaluate progress against specific targets for access and participation set for each grant award, as well as contributing to a national overview of the impact of the Arts Council's grants programme in meeting its objectives around access and participation. The collection of the data from 2018 is the first part of this recommendation, with the second part, the analysis of the data to take place from 2019. As such, it is concluded that this recommendation is partially implemented.

***Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented.***

### **3.6.2. Audiences and Population**

The review recommended that the Arts Council gather information on levels of participation by groups identified in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion as part of its data collection from funding recipients. The Arts Council has advised that it is not using this mode of data collection for this, but will rather depend on its annual survey of a nationally representative sample of the population to assess participation by these groups. While this is a useful data source, it is noted that the recommendation related to the specific outputs of the Arts Council's grants programme in terms of meeting its objective of enhancing opportunities to attend/participate in the arts, rather than to attitudes and activity among the general population. As such, it is concluded that this recommendation has not been implemented, although it is noted that part of the challenge to

implementation is around the ability of applicants to define these groups. It is further considered that with some adjustment and additional explanatory information to applicants, this information could be captured as part of the Arts Council's new data collection methodology discussed in the previous section and introduced in 2018.

***Conclusion: Recommendation not implemented.***

The review made a number of other recommendations around the collection of data on attendance at and participation in arts events among the general public. At the time of the review, the Arts Council collected information on attendance, participation and attitudes to the arts as part of a specially designed module in the TGI survey (nationally representative sample) and from the Audiences for the Performing Arts in Ireland report which was based on data around ticket sales and revenue collected and analysed by Theatre Forum. Since the publication of the review, the Arts Council has conducted a new tender for a nationally representative survey on the arts, with Behaviour and Attitudes winning the three-year contract (commencing 2018). Although the methodology is slightly different (B&A have offered a stand-alone survey with face-to-face interviews as distinct from the TGI phone survey of which the arts piece was just one module), both instruments offer a nationally representative sample and as such the recommendations of the review apply to both. In relation to the survey, the review recommended the following:

- The collection of data from the TGI survey should provide the basis for 3 of the performance indicators set out in Chapter 6.
- The possibilities for further developing the arts participation and attitudes sections of the TGI survey should be examined. In particular the questions relating to art forms and arts practices should track more closely with the arts areas funded by the Arts Council and not the more generic categorisations currently used which are relevant to a wider sectoral analysis.
- In relation to the TGI survey questions on attitudes to the arts, consideration should be given to gathering information on attitudes to the arts at national, regional and local levels, as well as gathering data on attitudes to public funding of the arts.

In relation to all three recommendations, the Arts Council has advised that it has engaged with Behaviours and Attitudes and has considered all three as part of the agreement on the final questionnaire. The second recommendation, in particular, relating to the better alignment between the questions and the Arts Council's arts areas has already been addressed in the design of the new survey instrument, however it is not possible to gather data at sub-regional level (recommendation 2) and there isn't direct alignment between the questions and the performance indicators which warrants further consideration of the indicators. As such, it is concluded that the recommendation on arts participation and attitudes has been fully implemented with the other two, partially implemented at this stage.

***Conclusion: One recommendation fully implemented, two recommendations partially implemented.***

In relation to its data collection activity around ticket sales and revenue, the review recommended that the Arts Council continue to monitor ticket sales data such that any sustained decrease in either ticket sales or revenue is identified in a timely fashion and appropriate action taken e.g. specific ticket sales targets as part of annual funding agreements. In response, the Arts Council has advised that these data are, from 2018, being collected as a condition of funding for grant recipients of multi-annual funding. Targets for audience/participation numbers are sought at application stage and will be reviewed throughout the life-cycle of the funding agreement. As the collection of the data has only commenced in 2018, it is concluded that this recommendation has been partially implemented pending the analysis of the data at the end of 2018 and its expansion to grant recipients of other schemes in future years.

***Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented.***

As part of the review's consideration of the Arts Council's engagement with its stakeholders, it recommended that the Arts Council engage and seek feedback from stakeholders and the public through stakeholder surveys and by maximising the feedback potential of its website and culturefox.ie. Given that there are two distinct elements to this recommendation, stakeholder engagement and maximisation of the feedback potential of its websites, these are treated as two separate recommendations in the report.

In response, the Arts Council has advised that it has completed its first annual stakeholder survey undertaken by Coyne research (2017-2018) which it is now being used to inform a number of direct dialogues with the arts sector over the course of 2018. As such, it is concluded that this part of the recommendation has been fully implemented although there is scope to further enhance this implementation by including an assessment of perceptions of the Arts Council among the general public through its Behaviours and Attitudes research instrument.

***Conclusion: Recommendation fully implemented.***

In relation to the recommendation to maximise the feedback potential of the Arts Council's website and that of culturefox.ie, the Arts Council has advised that it has just completed a full review of Culturefox.ie and is terminating the website in 2018. It is currently considering a range of other options to raise awareness of cultural output. Given the early stage of this consideration, it is not possible to conclude that this recommendation has been implemented. That said, given that the review was published in 2015, and the dynamic nature of social media, it is no longer certain that feedback through websites is an optimal mode of stakeholder engagement and as such, this recommendation should remain under review.

***Conclusion: Recommendation under review.***

More generally, the review recommended that the Arts Council review its media coverage as a measure of how well it is achieving its objective of advocating for the arts. The Arts Council now has a contract with Rue Point Media to monitor press coverage of the Arts Council, while also internally monitoring social media coverage concentrating on Facebook and Twitter. As such, it is considered

that this recommendation is fully implemented and that the Arts Council should publish the findings of both monitoring exercises as part of its annual report.

***Conclusion: Recommendation fully implemented.***

### **3.6.3. Artistic Quality**

At the time of the review, there was little data collection or analysis of the quality of the output supported by the Arts Council's grants programme. This situation reflected the general challenge, experienced throughout the arts sector, of how to objectively define or measure the 'quality' or 'value' of the arts. To begin to address this challenge, and based on experiences in other jurisdictions, the review recommended that the Arts Council consider introducing a system of peer review of artistic output for example by expanding the current use of arts advisers on peer panels to also include undertaking peer reviews on a proportion of grant funded projects. In response the Arts Council has indicated that a proportion of Council funded work is now reviewed by its arts advisers by means of a critical evaluation report (CER) process. This process includes a scoring system as part of the review methodology which allows results to be compared across different arts areas. Although at in the early stage of this process, the tracking of these scores by arts area and over time will contribute positively to the creation of a better understanding of the quality of the artistic offering supported by the Council's annual grants programme. On this basis, it is considered that this recommendation is fully implemented although a more formal target of the amount of projects to be reviewed in this manner should be set at the start of every year and included in the performance delivery agreement with the Department.

***Conclusion: Recommendation fully implemented.***

At the time of writing, there were a number of early stage initiatives in other jurisdictions by which new technologies were being applied to generate data on artistic quality e.g. the Quality Metrics initiative in England. The review recommended that the Arts Council maintain these initiatives under review for possible application in Ireland. In response, the Arts Council has advised that new data collection and analysis methodologies are being considered as part of the overall measurement framework. Currently the focus of that project is to integrate more effective ways of gathering data using the online application process. Although this response indicates the partial implementation of the recommendation, it is noted that data gathered as part of the online application process will not provide data on artistic quality, as such, it is considered that the Arts Council consider more broadly this recommendation with a particular focus on the international experience in this area.

***Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented.***

### **3.6.4. Partnerships**

The Value for Money and Policy review, building on the Arts Council's own 2014 strategic review, recognised the need to broaden the scope of its research to address information gaps across the increasingly diverse arts sector and, in particular, in relation to the measurement of the outcomes of the Arts Council's work. In this regard, the review recommended that the Council work to develop

partnerships with Government Departments and Agencies to ensure that data collected which may be relevant to the arts sector is available to the Arts Council and arts sector researchers. The review also recommended the continuation of its collaboration with the Irish Research Council. In terms of the latter recommendation the Arts Council has developed a strategic partnership agreement with the Irish Research Council for the period 2017 to 2020 which constitutes the full implementation of this recommendation. The Arts Council is also forging relationships with the ESRI, AIRO and the CSO on data collection and utilisation which will enhance the evidence-base around investment in the arts into the future. The Arts Council is also engaged in a number of joint research projects with local authorities including in relation to arts facilities and programming around the country and the social impact of the local authority arts programme. That said, there may be scope to expand this list of partnerships, subject to the availability of resources, to include other relevant Departments and Agencies including the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Enterprise Ireland, Fáilte Ireland etc. particularly in relation to better understanding the economic value of the arts sector. Accordingly, it is considered that this recommendation has been partially implemented.

***Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented.***

The review also highlighted the value of the UK's *Taking Part* survey in enhancing the evidence-base around attitudes to and participation in the arts. It recommended that, in partnership with the Department, the Arts Council examine the need for a similar survey instrument in Ireland or the opportunities to enhance the TGI survey that was in place at the time of the review. Since the publication of the review, the Arts Council has engaged Behaviours and Attitudes to undertake a nationally representative survey in this area, replacing the TGI survey instrument, and for which the questionnaire is still under review. Part of that review was to examine survey instruments in a number of jurisdictions including the *Taking Part* survey in the UK. The Arts Council has also advised that this recommendation needs to be considered by the Department. On this basis, it is considered that the recommendation has been partially implemented and that consideration of the need for a more comprehensive survey instrument should take place in the context of the annual performance delivery agreement with the Department and in the context of the quarterly liaison meeting. Consideration could also be given to the synergies that may exist between this recommendation and any research programme under the 'whole of Government' Creative Ireland initiative.

***Conclusion: Recommendation partially implemented.***

## Chapter 4: Conclusions

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A major criticism of Value for Money and Policy Reviews in the past has been that, while the reviews generate a broad range of recommendations and findings, there is no established mechanism to oversee and assess the implementation of these findings with the concern that, despite the valuable analysis undertaken, the value of the final published review is somewhat limited. To address this, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht proposed a review of the implementation of the recommendations of the 2015 Value for Money and Policy Review of the Arts Council as part of its 2018 Spending Review process.

From the analysis, it is clear that in the period 2016 to 2018, the Arts Council has made significant progress in implementing the recommendations of the review with some 83% of recommendations either fully or partially implemented. The development of the Arts Council's strategy, in parallel with the review of the Arts Council, is considered to have been a major factor in this achievement as the development of the strategy was informed, in part, by the findings of the review which ensured a certain alignment between the two documents and an ownership of the implementation of the recommendations by the Arts Council as part of their own strategy implementation approach. That said, this level of delivery would not have been achieved without the proactive and positive approach of the Arts Council in reorienting its programme, redesigning its funding framework, and working to enhance its capacity for evidence-based decision making and performance management. The assignment of an additional full-time HEO resource, sanctioned by the Department, to work on the implementation is considered as critical to this positive outcome.

In the course of the analysis, the Department has also identified some areas for further examination and consideration by the Department and the Arts Council to maintain the momentum in fully implementing the recommendations, as well as highlighting some recommendations which are no longer relevant and as such should be discounted from the Arts Council's annual report on progress to the Department. These are divided into two categories; general comments and conclusions linked to specific recommendations.

### 4.1.1. *General Comments*

In the first instance, the spending review found that the Arts Council's annual administration costs have increased both in absolute terms (to pre-2009 levels) and as a percentage of the total funding available to the Council to just over 10%. It is clear that increases in the Council's administration costs are to be expected following the severe cuts of the financial crisis and in response to rising costs across the economy, as well as in the context of additional support being needed to implement the Council's 10-year strategy and expanding grants programme. However, this upward trend needs to be maintained under review, including as part of the annual performance delivery agreement with the Department, if the Arts Council is to continue to be resilient to future financial shocks.

In terms of strengthening the overall oversight of the implementation process, the spending review paper recommends the following:

- As part of the Arts Council's mid-cycle review of the implementation of its 3-year plan, consideration should be given to the inclusion of a specific section on the findings of this

paper and the overall implementation of the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review; and

- The Department should consider including a specific section on the implementation of the Value for Money and Policy Review's recommendations, particularly as they relate to the use of the performance indicator set, within the annual performance delivery agreement.

The continued importance of the Arts Council's IT system is again recognised as essential for the full implementation of a number of recommendations within the review, as well as providing an essential tool for data collection and analysis to manage performance and inform decision-making. In this regard, it is noted that the Arts Council is proposing additional investment in a redesigned system which will further enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. This proposal is currently under consideration by the Department both in terms of its utility to the Arts Council to improve the evidence-base for policy and programme decisions as well as a performance management tool for its annual funding programme.

#### **4.1.2. *Conclusions linked to specific recommendations***

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has, over the course of this analysis, identified a number of areas where further consideration of particular recommendations or aspects of recommendations may be useful by the Arts Council as part of the continued drive to implement the review. These are grouped by reference to the category of recommendation that they relate to:

##### **Arts Council Strategy**

- The Arts Council may wish to consider continuing the series of reports on private investment in the arts (which finished in 2016) and which was informed by data collected as part of the RAISE programme.

##### **Annual Programme**

- The Arts Council should avoid operating the new 'development funding' scheme on a 'by invitation' to ensure the continued transparency of its systems in delivering its annual grants programme.
- The Arts Council should continue to review the profile of recurring funding recipients to ensure balance between 'core' and other funding within its programme and to maintain balance between strategic and programme priorities within the arts sector ecology.
- As part of its new scoring methodology for evaluating grant applications, the Arts Council may wish to re-examine the relative weighting of resource efficiency/value for money within the overall methodology.
- In addition, consideration could be given to the provision of scores and associated narrative to all applicants seeking feedback on applications, rather than just providing this detail to applicants under the strategic funding scheme.
- Consideration could be given to the publication of information on Cnuas grants and artistic output of Cnuas recipients in the same way that all other grants are publicised on the Arts Council's website.
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## Data Collection

- The Arts Council could consider more routine analysis and publication of the performance indicator set recommended by the Value for Money and Policy Review, as well as including these as part of the annual performance delivery agreement with the Department.
- The Arts Council should continue to examine ways of collecting information on attendance and participation by socially excluded or vulnerable groups as part of its data collection on outputs by funding recipients.
- The Arts Council could consider introducing an annual target of projects for critical evaluation by arts advisers as part of its peer review approach to assessing artistic quality and this should be included in the annual performance delivery agreement with the Department.
- The Arts Council should continue to monitor new methodologies for assessing artistic quality, particularly those introduced in other jurisdictions.
- In terms of enhancing the evidence-base around the arts sector, consideration could be given to engagement with other relevant Departments and Agencies including the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Enterprise Ireland, Fáilte Ireland etc. particularly in relation to better understanding the economic value of the arts sector.
- Consideration of the need for a more comprehensive survey instrument on attitudes to and participation in the arts should take place in the context of the annual performance delivery agreement and quarterly liaison meetings between the Department and the Arts Council. Consideration could also be given to the synergies that may exist between this recommendation and any research programme under the 'whole of Government' Creative Ireland initiative.

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## Appendix 1:

Section	Recommendation
Arts Council Strategy	<p>The Arts Council to consider the following as part of the development of the goals and objectives for its new strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to maximise the socio-economic value of the arts.</li> <li>• A need to continue to explore opportunities to generate funding for the arts from private, philanthropic and other sources.</li> </ul>
<p>Annual programme</p> <p><i>Existing commitments and strategic priorities</i></p>	<p>The review considered, in detail, two funding streams included in this category; the Cnuas and the touring and dissemination of work scheme, with the following recommendations for each:</p> <p>-- The Arts Council should consider options that would raise awareness of the output of Aosdána members in receipt of the Cnuas. Tracking that output is an essential first step in achieving this. In terms of the management of the overall funding requirements of the Cnuas, the Arts Council should examine the means at its disposal to manage the total funding including for example the setting of caps on the level of total funding available or varying the level of the Cnuas annually.</p> <p>-- For the touring and dissemination of work scheme, the review recommends that consideration be given to the inclusion of an organisation's potential to raise revenue as a criterion in future rounds of the scheme.</p>
<p>Annual programme</p> <p><i>Recurring funding</i></p>	<p>Recurring funding</p> <p>For "recurring funding" schemes, the review recommends that the Arts Council consider the following proposals:</p> <p>- Introducing multi-annual service level agreements, conditional on the</p>

	<p>availability of funding within the Arts Council’s annual Exchequer funding from the Department.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improving the diversity of organisations receiving recurring funding, especially under the regularly funded organisations (RFO) and annual funding (AF) schemes for example by setting aside a proportion of available funding for “new” organisations which demonstrate the potential to become nationally significant or significant within an art form.</li> <li>- Avoiding an over-dependence on core funding provided through the RFO and AF schemes by providing funding to organisations on the basis of multi-annual agreements for specific programmes of work or as an investment in the organisation’s capacity to generate alternate sources of income.</li> <li>- Improving transparency by operating the RFO on an open application basis, rather than by invitation only.</li> </ul>
<p>Annual programme</p> <p><i>Once-off and other funding</i></p>	<p>It is recommended that the positive trend of increasing support for “once off” funding schemes and awards should be continued to ensure the programme is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changes in the Arts Council’s operating environment.</p> <p>Over the course of the review, the value of the RAISE initiative was highlighted on a number of occasions. On that basis, the Arts Council should actively explore the opportunities to expand the RAISE initiative. This is considered critical to maximise the value of the public investment in the sector while also improving the financial sustainability of arts organisations throughout the country.</p>
<p>Operation and governance</p>	<p>As part of the review the operation and governance of the Arts Council was examined and the following recommendations are made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is recommended that the Arts Council undertake a review of its</li> </ul>

organisational structure and prepare a revised workforce plan, aligned to the new strategy for the Arts Council due in late 2015, to ensure that the Council staffing structure and resources remain fit for purpose.

- In recognition of the value of the IT system in delivering administrative efficiencies, it is considered important that the system be maintained.

The Arts Council was found to have achieved the necessary standards of governance. A number of opportunities were, however, identified to enhance its governance regime, as follows:

- In line with the principles established by Circular 13/2014 issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, value for money audits should also be conducted on programme expenditure as well as administration expenditure as part of the internal audit function.

- To further improve the transparency with which the Arts Council does its business, consideration should be given to revising a number of provisions in the code of governance framework including the definitions of 'interest' and 'unreasonable advocacy', section 2.8.10 relating to conflicts of interest, and the applications of all provisions relating to conflicts of interest to peer panels.

Where the Arts Council takes decisions relating to the allocation of public funds, its current systems could be enhanced as follows:

- Value for money should be included as a specific criterion at each level of the allocation decision-making process.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To increase the availability of funding for new initiatives, allocations might be made on the basis of a proportion of the previous year's allocation (rather than the whole allocation adjusted proportionally to reflect any change in the total funding for the current year).</li>   <li>- A scoring mechanism should be applied to ensure that the allocation of grants and awards is as transparent as possible. Details of scores should be made available to applicants and other interested parties.</li>   <li>- As allocations for each funding stream are agreed as part of the overall budget for each arts area, the total funding available for each arts area under each scheme should be published.</li>   <li>- To minimise the administrative burden of operating a large number of schemes, consideration could be given to the grouping of similar schemes and awards within a single application process.</li>   <li>- The potential for organisations to receive multiple awards should be kept under review in terms of monitoring the Arts Council's outputs to ensure no negative outcomes. Consideration should also be given to taking into account other Arts Council grants received as part of the application process for all funding streams.</li> </ul>
Data collection on outputs	<p>The Arts Council currently collects data on funding recipients as a condition of that funding. In line with the practice in other jurisdictions, this rich data-source should be expanded to collect a broader range of information and to better inform decision-making as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Arts Council should introduce a performance management/monitoring system for major expenditure decisions to ensure that value for money is achieved. This system should build on the existing Arts Council data collection system (linked to grants and awards) with an expanded set of data collected to enable the evaluation of individual grants (relative to targets) and schemes (relative to the Arts Council's objectives).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- These data should be used to facilitate the annual tracking of the Arts Council’s progress against agreed priorities and actions in the Service Level Agreement with the Department. In order to ensure the efficacy of such a progress report – targets and priorities should be clearly defined and agreed each year.</li>   <li>- The collection of these data should provide the basis for 8 of the performance indicators set out in Chapter 6.</li>   <li>- The Arts Council should consider how the outputs of its annual programme can be used to enhance the opportunities for people in all counties to access and participate in the arts.</li>   <li>- The Arts Council should gather information on levels of participation by groups identified in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.</li> </ul>
<p>Data collection on Participation, Attendances and Attitudes</p>	<p>The Arts Council collects information on attendances and participation by the general public through the TGI survey (attendances, participation and attitudes to the arts) and from the Audiences for the Performing Arts in Ireland report, prepared by Theatre Forum (ticket sales and revenue). The Arts Council should consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The collection of data from the TGI survey should provide the basis for 3 of the performance indicators set out in Chapter 6.</li>   <li>- The possibilities for further developing the arts participation and attitudes sections of the TGI survey should be examined. In particular the questions relating to art forms and arts practices should track more closely with the arts areas funded by the Arts Council and not the more generic categorisations currently used which are relevant to a wider sectoral analysis.</li>   <li>- In relation to the TGI survey questions on attitudes to the arts, consideration should be given to gathering information on attitudes to the arts at national, regional and local levels, as well as gathering data</li> </ul>

	<p>on attitudes to public funding of the arts.</p> <p>- The Arts Council should continue to monitor ticket sales data such that any sustained decrease in either ticket sales or revenue is identified in a timely fashion and appropriate action taken e.g. specific ticket sales targets as part of annual funding agreements.</p> <p>In terms of improving communications with stakeholders, it is recommended that the Arts Council's engage and seek feedback from stakeholders and the public through stakeholder surveys and by maximising the feedback potential of its website and culturefox.ie.</p> <p>The Arts Council should monitor the frequency and tone of media coverage of the arts in Ireland and of the Arts Council itself to ascertain how successfully it is advocating for the arts.</p>
<p>8.3.4</p> <p>Data collection on artistic quality</p>	<p>In relation to artistic quality, the review recommends the following:</p> <p>- The Arts Council should consider introducing peer review of artistic output supported by the Arts Council. Expanding the current use of arts advisers on peer panels to also include undertaking peer reviews on a proportion of the output should be considered in this regard.</p> <p>- The capacity of the culturefox.ie website to collect feedback from audiences should also be examined.</p> <p>- The use of new technologies to generate data on artistic quality, for example the Quality Metrics initiative in England, should be kept under review.</p>
<p>Enhancing the evidence-base</p>	<p>The Arts Council should work to develop partnerships with Government Departments and Agencies to ensure that data collected which may be relevant to the arts sector, is collected in a way that is useful to establishing the evidence-base and also is made available to</p>

	<p>the Arts Council and arts sector researchers. It should also continue its collaboration with the Irish Research Council.</p> <p>Allied to this, the Arts Council should, in partnership with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, examine the need for a single survey instrument for the collection of data on the wider arts and culture similar to the 'Taking Part' survey in the UK or what opportunities exist to enhance existing survey instruments e.g. the TGI survey. Other key stakeholders should include national and regional cultural institutions and local government. The process to develop the new national culture policy 'Culture 2025' should also be a consideration in developing the necessary survey to ensure that it remains relevant and sustainable</p>
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Place this on the last page and list the relevant items that apply in terms of Quality Assurance undergone]

### Quality assurance process

To ensure accuracy and methodological rigour, the author engaged in the following quality assurance process.

#### Internal/Departmental

##### Line management

Spending Review Steering group

##### Other divisions/sections

Peer review (IGEES network, seminars, conferences etc.)

#### External

##### Other Government Department

Steering group

Quality Assurance Group (QAG)

Peer review (IGEES network, seminars, conferences etc.)

External expert(s)

#### Other – Arts Council of Ireland

