



**National Campaign for the Arts:  
Making the Case for the Arts in Ireland**

## **NCFA Strategy on Research**



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## **The NCFA Message**

We believe in a society that values creativity,  
imagination and expression.

We believe the arts enrich our lives.

We believe in the value of the arts.

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to  
participate in and enjoy the arts.

## **Our campaign aims**

To be a voice for the arts in Ireland,  
communicating the value of the arts and campaigning  
for continued and increased engagement with and investment in the arts.

To work with others to ensure Ireland values all those who work in the arts  
and provides a fertile and supportive environment for artists.

To work with others to enable the arts to  
make the fullest possible contribution  
to Irish society and its future.

## **Our campaign objectives**

To capture more fully the value of the arts in Ireland,  
working hand in hand with the arts sector, artists, the public, and Government.

To work with others to build an evidence base that will inform policy  
and allow the arts to innovate and reach a wider audience.

To build a deeper understanding of the mutual values  
of the arts and education and seek achievable means to embed  
the arts in education, working closely with educational partners.

To work to ensure that everyone in Ireland  
can experience and participate in the arts.

## Foreword

In 2012, the National Campaign for the Arts undertook an analysis of its activities and reviewed its achievements since beginning its work in 2009.

At the same time, the NCFA commissioned an independent assessment of the arts evidence base in Ireland. We found that the cultural and arts sectors appear to be lagging behind comparable countries in strategically building a comprehensive evidence base for policy. We sought advice on how to improve this and gathered examples of how this situation has been addressed in Ireland and other countries.

Our NCFA Strategy on Research presents these as options for further consideration in order to stimulate interest and action among policy makers.

There is no one existing model that can simply be copied. In fact, what we found was that while there are successes elsewhere they too have their shortcomings. This is most obvious where long-term research is concerned. Therefore, there is a real opportunity in Ireland to lead on this internationally.

We believe that a good evidence base, founded on systematic and appropriate research, is the basis for a change in ways of thinking about the arts among policy makers and that it will also improve how the value of the arts is generally communicated.

The NCFA Strategy on Research is complemented by an additional position paper that further puts our action on research in context.

On an ongoing basis, we are assembling a relevant research resource on our website adding to it as new information, analysis, and examples of arts research relevant to policy-making emerges.

All our research resources and documents are available at [www.ncfa.ie](http://www.ncfa.ie)

## **NCFA Strategy on Research: Introduction**

The NCFA Strategy on Research has its roots in the unsettled period of Autumn 2009, when Ireland was first coming to terms with the scale of the economic crisis. The extent to which the country's financial security had been compromised and the length of time we would have to live with the consequences. For stakeholders in the arts, it was a period of vigorous grassroots activity and organizing. The so-called McCarthy report – prepared for the then-government – by a group of economists, sketched out a plan of actions in the arts that would have reduced the arts and cultural sector catastrophically. In this climate, the NCFA began.

Initially a small group, motivated by the need to urgently make the case for the centrality of the arts to the wellbeing of our society, the NCFA was soon formalised into a steering committee. A national coordinator was appointed and a network of constituency coordinators was organized across the country. Very quickly, major festivals, venues, producers, representative organizations, and independent artists in visual arts, theatre, film, dance, music, literature, architecture, and collaborative arts and artists, gathered to make the case for the arts. Unsupported McCarthy report based recommendations allegedly to be linked to cost savings and public sector reform gave rise to a plan of action by the NCFA to show the positive economic contribution of the arts to Ireland.\* The NCFA published information and lobbied political parties in local and central government and in opposition.

The NCFA has been through many iterations since: refining its thinking; testing its assertions; identifying new opportunities, and making the case for the centrality of cultural participation and engagement for all the people of Ireland. It has been an empowering experience, bringing forth a wealth of possibilities and alliances that permeate every walk of Irish life. We have learnt that as a society, far from diminishing our artistic affinity, the economic crisis has sharply honed our perception of its importance to our sense of ourselves now and into the future.

There is a general consensus that the arts are important and valued by the public in Ireland. Behind this, lies a rich hinterland of potential for research. Now is the time for us to explore this, together and with others, to find the new learning that will help us understand how best the arts can serve the public and how government and the state can best serve the arts. In doing so, we acknowledge the research that has gone before us and the actions of state agencies, government and cultural institutions, local authorities, representative organisations and academics.

The NCFA is embarking upon this process because we believe that the arts will play a formative part in shaping our future. The present task is to better understand the funded arts sector so that future generations will continue to be enriched by the arts. To complement the NCFA Strategy on Research we have also published an NCFA Position on Research paper that elaborates on the circumstances that moved us to advocate for action on research in the arts in Ireland.

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\* Background on the NCFA's campaigning in response to the Irish government's public sector reform plans affecting arts and culture available on our website [www.ncfa.ie](http://www.ncfa.ie)

## Research Approach

The NCFA aims to make a positive contribution to public knowledge about the funded arts sector by fostering understanding and common cause between the arts and other sectors.

The NCFA aims to establish new avenues of communication between researchers and arts communities so as to better inform policy-making for the funded arts sector in Ireland.

The NCFA will lobby to improve decision makers' approaches to understanding of the funded arts sector by bringing the sector's social, economic, and cultural achievements to political attention.

The NCFA will advocate for greater cooperation and openness across academic, professional, and non-traditional research communities, in order to promote accessibility in the policy arena and ultimately enrich the public conversation about the arts.

## Research Agenda

We believe we have a persuasive case to make and that action on research in the arts is mutually beneficial to the public and the funded arts sector. We will do this through:

### **NCFA Colloquia in 2013**

When we will present:

- A set of thematic conversations accompanied by a discussion paper.

### **Advocacy from 2013 to 2016**

When we will seek to promote cooperation and collaboration on:

- Annual Profiling of the Funded Arts Sector and better use of Existing and Collected Data;
- A Biennial Survey of Cultural Participation;
- Commissioning of a Longitudinal Study Measuring the Impact of the Arts on Individuals.

## Research Goal

### **A Better Evidence-Base for Better Policy-Making in the Arts.**

So that policy decisions are secure and the value of the funded arts sector is properly understood. New attitudes to research and the use of different definitions, new research tools, and complementary methods are essential, desirable, and possible.

## NCFA Colloquia

The NCFA has commissioned a series of focused group discussions beginning in the first half of 2013. These events have been devised in consultation with the NCFA and managed independently on behalf of the NCFA.

A discussion paper for the series will act as a provocation designed to animate a set of thematics that will be devised for the colloquia. At the conclusion of the colloquia a report based on the outcomes of the discussions will be publicly available for further reference and consultation. The NCFA expects to draw on the report to inform future NCFA strategy and campaign messages.

The NCFA wants traditional models for consultation used within the arts and cultural sector to improve. We will work with arts and cultural agencies to help determine what initiatives would facilitate deeper conversations and better embed them in future research relationships.

Such a deliberative approach allows for an exploration to public attitudes to arts funding and funding priorities, through specifically designed discursive questions, supported by the circulation of relevant pieces of policy, models of practice, or other useful artifacts. One such example could be the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon's study of the behaviour and attitudes of the Irish public towards the arts (Hibernian Consulting, 2006). This was a continuance of research undertaken in 1983 and 1994 and intentionally methodologically similar.

In preparation for the colloquia, the NCFA has drawn on issues represented in a selection of published research. Some of the documents and questions arising are included here (See, Appendix 1, on page 9).

A snapshot of ongoing research in Ireland, Northern Ireland, UK, Australia and USA, is available on the NCFA website. This contextualizes the current dearth of published research information available within Ireland and highlights the gaps in our research base and demonstrates the overtly instrumental nature of what published research material does exist.

## **NCFA advocacy on research**

The NCFA believes that there is shared desire amongst all stakeholders to know more about how the arts operate in society and are valued. We want to seek out ways and approaches, modes and methodologies that will yield better results and improve on traditional models for research within the arts and cultural sector.

We will work with arts and cultural agencies nationally to help find and facilitate potential partners, interested and able to embrace research alternatives and initiatives, that will produce better public policy outcomes in the arts in Ireland.

The NCFA believes that cross-agency cooperation is necessary and that collaboration will foster the exchange of organizational knowledge and strengthen shared interests. The expertise of partners will ensure the responsible management of data and data protection for policy purposes. We are acutely aware that any calls we may make for new programmes of research or evaluation activities must be focused and justified at a time of reduced public expenditure.

*The NCFA will specifically advocate for –*

- 1. Annual Profiling of the Funded Arts Sector and better use of Existing and Collected Data;**
- 2. A Biennial Survey of Cultural Participation;**
- 3. Commissioning of a Longitudinal Study Measuring the Impact of the Arts on Individuals.**

### **1 Annual profiling of the funded arts sector & better use of existing and collected data.**

This requires strong partnership-working models involving partners who are already gathering data as part of their function in order to scope out the possible delivery options.

- a) Capturing the Gross Value Added (GVA) impacts of the arts (Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon & ESRI, 2008). The contribution of the arts to the economy is measured in GVA terms, but the ‘economic value’ of the arts as it is expressed through the choices people make with the most common unit of measurement, that is, money.
- b) Sector profiling using information from funded arts sector that is already acquired as part of the accountability process. For example, the following study on secondary data:

‘The Art of the Possible: using Secondary Data to Detect Social and Economic Impacts from Investment in Culture and Sport’ has been undertaken in England by CASE (the Culture and Sport Evidence programme). This was commissioned by the Department of Culture Media and Sport in Britain, in collaboration with four partners in arts, sport, heritage, and library sectors (DCMS 2010).

## **2 Biennial survey of cultural participation.**

Barriers to participation in the arts continue (Lunn & Kelly, 2008 & NESF, 2007). Using strong Value For Money (VFM) arguments and the full expertise and cooperation of the arts sector in order to make this successful, the NCFA can assist in explorations on what the possibilities are for a cross government department/agency initiative.

*Examples of how this might be achieved –*

a) DCAL Social and Economic Research and Survey Programme.

In 2011, the Dept of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Northern Ireland scoped its future research needs based on the Ministerial and Departmental priorities. In order to provide a clearer and direct link with policy, the areas identified for further research are categorised under the Department's five key areas: economy, education, health, social inclusion and the environment (Dept of Culture, Arts and Leisure, 2013).

b) The Irish Sports Council has formed targeted partnerships with the Economic and Social Research Institute, third level research centres, and the Central Statistics Office.

c) The Cultural Value Project. Launched December, 2012.

In launching this two-year Cultural Value Project, the Arts & Humanities Research Council wishes to make a major contribution to how we think about the value of arts and culture to individuals and to society. Recent years have seen many attempts to capture that value in straightforward ways, not least in order to make the case to governments for public funding, but none have commanded widespread confidence (Arts, Humanities and Research Council, 2013).

## **3 Longitudinal study measuring the impact of the arts on individuals.**

First, a feasibility study is required to scope the research, identify the expertise needed, establish the costs, what funding is required and its availability, and what partners are required.

*Example of the longitudinal approach and partnership model –*

a) The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA), launched in 2006, to study a representative cohort of at least 8,000 people, aged 50 and over and resident in Ireland, charting their health, social and economic circumstances over a 10-year period. The study is being carried out by Trinity College Dublin in collaboration with an inter-disciplinary panel of scientific researchers, with expertise in various fields of ageing, from Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT), Economic and Social Research

Institute (ESRI), National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG), The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), University College Cork (UCC), University College Dublin (UCD) and Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT). A group of international scientists advises the TILDA investigators. TILDA is funded by the Department of Health and Children, Irish Life plc, and the Atlantic Philanthropies.

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## APPENDIX 1

From, 'The Public and the Arts' (Hibernian Consulting, 2006):

75% of respondents believed that just as much importance should be given to providing arts amenities as is given to providing sports amenities.

Almost 90% believe that the arts play an important and valuable role in a modern society like Ireland.

A significant fall in the proportion of the population experiencing difficulties in attending or taking part in arts activities – down from 73% in 1994 to only 17% in 2006.

Levels of attendance and participation have stayed more or less the same between 1994 and 2006.

*Some other research already published and commonly cited –*

- The 'Points of Alignment' (2008a) report by the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon articulated the crucial role of the Department of Education and Science in advancing the case for the arts in education.
- 'Arts, education and other learning settings' (2008b) is a digest of information from 72 research reports relating to arts education between 1979 and 2007, published by the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon.
- The Australia Council defined 'artistic vibrancy' by adopting a wide and rich approach in 'Meaningful Measurement: a review of the literature about measuring artistic vibrancy' (2009) the Australia Council for the Arts included audience engagement, the preservation or development of artforms, artist development, and community relevance in their working definition of artistic excellence (Bailey, 2009).
- The issues raised regarding cultural participation and psychological access in Lunn and Kelly's (2008) report 'In the Frame Out of the Picture?', which draws on the (2007) statistical analysis of public involvement in the arts by the National Economic and Social Forum.
- A new public value measurement framework has been developed for the Department of the Arts and Culture of the Western Australian Government. 'A public value measurement framework for the arts' (2012) includes measures for creativity, rigour, authenticity, innovation, and excellence when defining artistic quality (Chapell & Knell, 2012).
- The issues raised in 'Measuring the value of culture', by AHRSC/DCMS research fellow Dave O'Brien (2010b). Report to the Department for Culture Media and Sport, UK.

*Based on these research examples, questions that might typically be asked include –*

Q What are the **responsibilities** of the funded arts sector in Ireland? Is the funded arts sector clear about its areas of responsibility? How do the sector's **accountabilities** extend to working with others toward equal access, and the contribution of the arts to **civil society**?

Q How should we measure **quality**? Notions of artistic quality are often self-imposed by artists and cultural producers, is this an aspect of artistic production that needs to be further defined? And who should define it?

Q How should we measure **reach** and **impact**? There is a growing interest in the impacts of the arts on social capital formation, the cohesiveness of communities, and the impacts of all of this on a vibrant democracy and civil society. A rigorous approach to how 'reach' and 'impact' are defined and understood in relation to the arts should draw on international practice. It should then go further in examining whether new terms are needed to capture the key dynamics of broader engagement and impact resulting from arts based activities.

Q What type of **cultural entitlements** do we want to create and uphold and how do we ensure the best arts education is offered in our **schools, colleges and universities**?

Q What kind of learning experiences and curriculum development can happen if cultural organisations could work more closely with **educators** at every level?

Q To what extent does the arts sector accept as legitimate **status quo** cultural policies and practices that are formed within institutional hierarchies?

Measures of **reach** could include audience numbers, diversity and the extent of connection with target communities of interest. Reach also encompasses the development capacity in communities of practice (artistic, amateur, commercial); the leverage of investment from non public sources; and the extent to which any publicly funded activities create platforms from which future activities can emerge.

**Impact** needs to be defined in ways that would allow for an easier understanding of the direct and indirect effects of arts investment and activity. For example, there is a wide range of direct and indirect economic and social benefits produced by the arts, and a burgeoning interest in a range of economic and social measurement techniques. The arts also produce a broader set of induced benefits concerned with the 'liveability' of places, in terms of the contribution of the cultural offer to the quality of life and reputation of Ireland, and 'place-making' activities, in which cultural activity helps the economic and social activation of places.

## APPENDIX 2

The Taking Part Survey (2010a) collects data on many aspects of leisure, culture and sport in England, as well as an in-depth range of socio-demographic information on respondents.

The need for consistent, high quality national data on engagement with culture and sport led to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and three partners (Arts Council England, English Heritage and Sport England) commissioning the Taking Part survey, the first of its kind to provide data of this quality.

The main sectors for which data is gathered in the 'Taking Part' survey are:

- Arts
- Museums and galleries
- Archives
- Libraries
- Heritage
- Sport

For each of these sectors, data about the reasons for participating and not participating, barriers to participation, and the frequency of participation are also collected.

In addition to these sectors, data sets are also gathered on a variety of other sectors and topics.

These include:

- Social capital
- Engagement in sectors while growing up
- Volunteering
- Internet / TV / radio use and access
- Attitudes to heritage / the arts
- Demographics

The total survey size is around 15,000 respondents, and Department for Culture, Media and Sport is committed to supporting the survey until at least 2015.

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This strategy paper is complemented by our NCFA Position on Research and both are available on our website.