Arts & Disability Ireland

Leading Change

in Arts and Culture

Strategic Plan

2017–2021

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by Arts & Disability Ireland

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Foreword

Arts & Disability Ireland (ADI) is excited to present **Leading Change in Arts and Culture**, our strategic plan for 2017 to 2021. Building on our first policy and strategy publication, **Becoming a National Resource: ADI’s Policy and Strategic Direction 2011–2016**, this new planoutlines the next phase in our evolution.

Championing the creativity of artists with disabilities and promoting inclusive experiences for audiences with disabilities lies at the heart of ADI’s work. We use every opportunity to make this happen, in partnership with the arts sector, people with disabilities and the wider communities in which they live. We believe passionately that every person can experience, enjoy and contribute to the full range of artistic life in Ireland and beyond.

ADI’s Strategic Plan 2017–2021 aims to take us further towards realising our ambitious vision. Until now we’ve focused on effecting change by embedding knowledge and legacy in all the partnerships we’ve been involved in. From this point on we will seek to scale up our impact, in partnership with others, to achieve transformational change across the arts sector. We want to see ambitious and innovative art by people with disabilities throughout the country. We want to achieve consistency and coherence in every region, not just in pockets or particular places. We are aiming for a series of strategic multi-annual projects that will result in greater visibility for the work of artists with disabilities. We are also determined to embed a more holistic approach to accessible arts programming at a local, regional and national level.

The Arts Council’s annual funding programme provides the organisation with stability and security by contributing towards both operating and artistic programming costs. This support is critical. We are very grateful for it, and for project funding, as well as the significant in-kind support offered by our partner organisations.

The organisation’s ability to achieve its vision relies on the commitment of its staff. We are deeply grateful to Leah Johnston, Amie Lawless and Ramona Mulcahy, as well as our dedicated audio describers, captioners, trainers and consultants. Thank you also to all ADI board members, past and present, who have given so many years of voluntary service to the organisation.

We look forward to cooperating with all our partners and stakeholders during the next five years, as we work to implement this strategic plan.

Niamh Ní Chonchubhair Pádraig Naughton

**Chairperson Executive Director**

Introducing

Arts & Disability Ireland

Arts & Disability Ireland (ADI) is the national development and resource organisation dealing with arts and disability issues. We:

* promote engagement with the arts at all levels – as professional artists, audience members and arts workers – for people of all ages with disabilities of all kinds
* work towards arts programmes and arts venues becoming fully accessible experiences for all audiences
* advocate for inclusive policy and practice which provides real access to all aspects of the arts for people with disabilities, and for everyone.

ADI’s vision is inclusive. We believe that all people can experience, enjoy and contribute to the full range of artistic life. Our remit is the interface between the arts and people with impairments of all kinds. We see this as our contribution to bringing about the full inclusion in arts and cultural life of everyone who lives in Ireland. Experiencing the best of Irish and visiting arts is everyone’s right, and is central to fostering debate and inspiring creativity in all people.

ADI believes that involvement and inclusion in arts and culture – for people with disabilities and for everybody else – is everyone’s responsibility. We contribute our expertise on arts and disability so that others can also play their part.

People with disabilities make up a growing proportion of the Irish population. Whether younger or older, with lifelong disabilities or more recently acquired impairments, all currently experience barriers to their participation in and enjoyment of arts and culture. ADI aims to ensure that these barriers are removed, and that inclusion and involvement in arts and culture, in whatever form, at whatever level and by whatever means, become natural and easy for everyone who has a disability.

Language and terminology

ADI uses ‘arts and disability’ as an umbrella term: it covers all kinds of artistic expression by people with disabilities in all artforms; inclusive experiences for audiences with disabilities; the involvement of arts workers with disabilities; access services; advocacy; and much more. We seek to create the conditions in which people with disabilities, and the disability community in all its diversity, can participate, practise and access arts and culture in their broadest sense.

ADI uses the definition of disability in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which says:

The term ‘persons with disabilities’ is used to apply to all persons with disabilities, including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal or environmental barriers, hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

We work to ensure that these barriers are dismantled, so that people with disabilities living in Ireland can experience the arts without hindrance of any kind. We recognise that disability may be visible or invisible, long-standing or temporary, and that in Ireland the ‘disability community’ is understood to include a broad coalition of people with disabilities, their families, friends, advocates and representative organisations. ADI firmly believes that arts and culture are for everyone.

ADI’s history and context

ADI grew out of Very Special Arts Ireland (VSA Ireland), set up in 1985 and allied to the VSA network based in the US. Its main focus was artists with disabilities. VSA Ireland was also part of the innovative artistic programme of City Arts Centre, Dublin.

In 2001 VSA Ireland changed its name to Arts & Disability Ireland (ADI) in order to reflect contemporary thinking about disability inclusion. In 2005 we broadened our scope to include audiences with disabilities. It was at that time that ADI graduated from supporting just two Dublin-based drama and dance programmes to developing new partnerships in locations throughout Ireland in a range of artforms. ADI’s purpose evolved to demonstrate new approaches to engaging and involving artists and audiences with disabilities through partnership working.

Our last strategic plan, **Becoming a National Resource**, shaped our work from 2011 to 2016. Highlights of our work during that time, in relation to artists, audiences and the arts, are shown on the following pages.

Artists

Highlights of our work during 2011 – 2016 include:

* + Arts and Disability Connect, a funding scheme for artists with disabilities managed on behalf of the Arts Council, which supported 24 new work, mentoring and training awards in 2014–2016
  + a strategic partnership with Fire Station Artists’ Studios, which resulted in four residencies, six mentoring opportunities and four commissions for visual artists with disabilities, as well as a co-curated exhibition, **A Different Republic**
  + the presentation of internationally acclaimed arts and disability work in Ireland, including Graeae’s **Signs of a Diva**, Robert Softley’s **If These Spasms Could Speak** and Jess Thom’s **Backstage in Biscuit Land***.*

Audiences

Highlights of our work during 2011 – 2016 include:

* + audio description and captioning for eight national performing arts and visual arts tours, which visited 22 venues across Ireland in 2012-2016. This was supported by the Arts Council’s Touring and Dissemination of Work Scheme
  + audio description of exhibitions, using Discovery Pens, at the Butler Gallery, Kilkenny (annually, 2013-2016), at the Wexford Arts Centre and, in Dublin, at the Gallery of Photography and The LAB Gallery
  + launch of a regular monthly programme of audio described and open captioned cultural cinema across all three screens at the Irish Film Institute, Dublin, in 2016.

The arts

Highlights of our work during 2011 – 2016 include:

* Arts and Disability Networking partnerships with the Arts Council and local authority arts offices, aimed at embedding arts and disability practice outside Dublin
* Ignite, a partnership with the Arts Council and local authorities in Mayo, Galway and Cork, created three new commissions worth €60,000 each, led by internationally recognised artists with disabilities
* Creative Connections conference, attended by 230 people, was held in Galway in 2016.

Consultation with stakeholders

In 2016, as part of reviewing the outcomes of our last strategic plan and to provide an opportunity for the sector to assist in shaping this new plan, **Leading Change in Arts and Culture**, we undertook afacilitated consultation with over 50 stakeholders from across the arts as well as an open-call online consultation. From this engagement we know that ADI is:

* the go-to resource organisation for arts and disability in Ireland and the pre-eminent source of all information and contacts   
  related to all aspects of arts and disability provision and practice
* credited with increasing, and continuing to increase, standards in arts and disability work, as well as improving the status of the sector and of artists with disabilities
* valued as an effective advocate and influencer which has brought about real change through incremental and supportive activity aimed at enhancing capacity in arts and disability work.

Key challenges for ADI

Increasingly, people with disabilities are looking to claim and maintain their place in the wider community, rather than seeking to be a separate or distinct community. There is an obvious challenge for ADI in trying to serve the needs of a growing but increasingly fragmented population of people with disabilities. In parallel, the clear delineation that has existed up to now, describing people’s identity and impairment, is shifting. Similarly, the distinctions between different artforms and where art is presented are merging. We believe that these distinctions will become more blurred in the coming years.

Over time, in Ireland, the emphasis will shift from provision for people with particular impairments to achieving full participation for everyone, whether they identify as having a disability or not. Consequently, ADI’s work will need to stretch from providing individually tailored solutions to positioning the arts sector to embrace approaches that are universally designed and anticipatory. We want to create an Irish arts and cultural environment that is at its core inclusive and responsive. Once we achieve that, there will be continuity of access throughout the country, for artists and audiences alike. We are excited to be part of the essential move towards seamless equality.

In producing this strategic plan, ADI has been realistic about what our small team can do with the funding and resources available to us. Being strategic sometimes involves making hard choices about what is – and is not – our work. We may need to ‘do less, better’ in some areas, and to pass on our expertise so that others can provide what we have done until now. We want to make space to develop new, strategically potent work that can move us decisively towards our vision.

During the life of this strategic plan we will at all times bear in mind where we can improve or add value to what is already in place or already happening, and what we can do that others cannot. We will continue to dream big, and to seek support and collaboration from those who can help us.

Vision and mission

**ADI’s vision** is of an Ireland where people with disabilities can fully experience and contribute to Irish artistic and cultural life on a basis of equality with everyone else.

**ADI’s mission** is to use its leadership role in arts and disability work to bring about full inclusion, access and opportunities for artists and audiences with disabilities in Ireland.

Values in action

ADI knows that full inclusion in arts and culture can’t be achieved by our actions or advocacy alone. We believe that it is everybody’s responsibility:

* We believe in partnership, collaboration, relatedness and everybody playing their part.
* We will play to our strengths and concentrate on the areas of work in which we can be most effective and influential.
* We will support others to do their jobs more inclusively, seeking out strategic partners who have capacities we lack or influence that can help us achieve our vision.
* We will act as a connector, linking artists and organisations nationally and internationally.
* We will contribute our ideas and expertise, influencing and engaging with issues of mutual strategic importance.

We value reciprocal commitment in others. Recognising the changing demographics of Ireland, we know that we have expertise to offer as well as much to learn from our partners. With careful confidence and strategic intent, we know we can stride towards the vision that will make Irish arts and culture richer, more open and more inclusive.

ADI’s strategy 2017–2021

**Leading Change in Arts and Culture** outlines the strategy that will guide ADI’s work and development between 2017 and 2021.

During these five years ADI will focus on three strategic areas: **artists, audiences,** and **the arts and cultural environment**. We have identified **one key aim for each area**:

* **Artists**: We aim to ensure that Irish artists with disabilities experience no barriers in making art, and that their quality work is seen and appreciated in Ireland and internationally.
* **Audiences**: We aim to ensure that audiences enjoy seamless, holistic, person-centred experiences.
* **Arts and cultural environment**: We aim to ensure that disability inclusion becomes a natural part of the practice of arts influencers and arts workers.

Linked together, these aims comprise a big step on the way to achieving our vision of an Ireland in which people with disabilities can fully experience and contribute to Irish artistic and cultural life on a basis of equality with everyone else.

In order to achieve these key aims, ADI has identified three objectives for each strategic area, and the actions required to advance them.

Artists

We aim to ensure that artists with disabilities experience no barriers in making art, and that their quality work is seen and appreciated in Ireland and internationally.

Objectives

* **Progression:** Initiate partnerships to expand the range of progression pathways open to artists with disabilities seeking to develop their practice at a professional level, through supporting training, mentoring, bursaries, residencies and commissioning opportunities.
* **Connections:** Broker relationships between artists with disabilities and presenters, curators and producers that foster creative engagement and equitable, innovative collaborations.
* **Showcasing:** Establish, in collaboration with theatres, galleries, multi-disciplinary arts venues and festivals, a broad range of presentation platforms aimed at showcasing new, high-quality arts and disability work in Ireland and abroad.

How we will advance our artist-related aim and objectives:

* We will use Arts and Disability Connect, the funding scheme that we manage on behalf of the Arts Council, as the primary springboard for training, mentoring and new work opportunities for artists with disabilities. We will aim to increase the level of applications and will support successful awardees to transition to mainstream Arts Council and local authority funding opportunities.
* We will create programming, curatorial and commissioning opportunities for people with disabilities in order to foster a new generation of expertise and advocates for high-quality arts and disability work. ADI’s online Curated Space and the showcasing platform described below will be key tools for achieving this. We will encourage the wider availability of this work through a multiplicity of means.
* We will develop an arts and disability showcasing platform with selected multi-disciplinary venues and festivals in Ireland. We will identify and promote high-quality, innovative Irish arts and disability work for presentation internationally.

Audiences

We aim to ensure that audiences enjoy seamless, holistic, person-centred experiences.

Objectives

* **Access:** Support theatres, galleries, multi-disciplinary arts venues and festivals to integrate all access provisions in a holistic way across their spaces, programmes, customer service and marketing.
* **Audience development:** Empower theatres, galleries, multi-disciplinary arts venues and festivals to reach, develop and sustain audiences with disabilities as an integral part of their broader and ongoing audience development strategy.
* **Continuity:** Establish local and/or regional partnerships to build continuity in access to arts programming for audiences with disabilities throughout localities and communities.

How we will advance our audience-related aim and objectives:

* We will offer theatres, galleries, multi-disciplinary arts venues and festivals a range of supports to integrate access provisions in a holistic way. Supports will include, but not be limited to, tailored training, seminars, access audits, website testing, guidance, action planning and the development and support of user groups.
* We will develop and foster local and regional access partnerships, comprising a combination of multi-disciplinary arts venues, theatres, galleries, museums and festivals which, with our support, can realise an accessible arts infrastructure and shared accessible programme in their locality or region.
* We will host an international conference to build on the experience gained through our Access Partnerships, allowing for a peer to peer exchange with a range of arts and cultural access professionals and advocates from Ireland and abroad. The conference will draw on our longstanding relationship with the annual LEAD Conference organised by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.

The arts and cultural environment

We aim to ensure that disability inclusion becomes a natural part of the practice of arts influencers and arts workers.

Objectives

* **Leadership:** Grow, cultivate and champion all committed arts leaders who can contribute to the development of arts and disability in Ireland at the highest level.
* **Partnership and collaboration:** Endeavour to model all partnerships and collaborations in line with our vision, mission and values.
* **Research:** Seek, develop and collaborate in research initiatives to advance policy and practice leading to wider inclusion of artists and audiences with disabilities in Ireland.

How we will advance our arts and cultural environment aim and objectives:

* We will use **Leading Change in Arts and Culture** to grow, cultivate and champion all committed arts leaders who can contribute to the development of arts and disability in Ireland at the highest level.
* Additionally, we will give priority to:
  + initiating dialogue among arts critics and academics in order to raise the level and depth of arts criticism related to the work of artists with disabilities in Ireland
  + leading on the creation and presentation of new work by artists with disabilities for children, young people and families in collaboration with venues, production companies and touring networks.
* We will formalise creative relationships with strategically placed partners, with a view to advancing the inclusion of artists and audiences in arts and cultural practice.
* We will prioritise two areas of research and use the findings to advance policy and practice. We will:   
  + work with audience development and marketing consultants to find out how audiences with disabilities engage with arts and culture nationwide, and to make recommendations for future development
  + commission research aimed at understanding how social welfare and taxation systems impact on the lives of people with disabilities who seek to engage in the arts at a professional level.

Implementing our strategy and monitoring our impact

**Leading Change in Arts and Culture** outlines the broad strategy that will guide ADI’s work and development between 2017 and 2021. This will be underpinned by annual programme plans running January to December. Preparation of the annual programme will take place in autumn each year, with the programme being finalised and budgets set in December. The implementation of future programmes will be based on project impacts, organisational capacity and resources.

ADI will monitor and evaluate its impact by tracking progress in relation to the strategic aims and objectives outlined in this document and in annual action plans. We will:

* capture and collate feedback from stakeholders at all of our public events
* continue to enhance systems for tracking the direct and indirect impact of our strategy
* keep abreast of what is happening in the external environment
* reflect on and learn from our direct experience and the experience of others.

**Leading Change in Arts and Culture** aims to build on ADI’s past achievements. **By 2021, what we want is**:

* seamless access for people with disabilities to all arts and cultural activities
* disability inclusion to be an integral part of arts and cultural practice at all levels
* great artists with disabilities to be programmed nationally and internationally
* people with disabilities to be recognised as arts and cultural leaders and influencers
* ADI to be recognised nationally and internationally as the source of an inclusion model that really works.

Organisational capacity and growth

To fulfil our ambitious targets, ADI will keep its organisational capacity and growth under continual review.

Current situation

ADI currently has three full-time and one part-time staff members, overseen by a voluntary Board of five directors. Our Board and staff share a valuable combination of experience and skills, including the lived experience of disability, a track record in arts-based or arts management practice, and knowledge of the particular context of arts and disability in Ireland. We use the services of several freelance contractors to complement the skill sets of the staff and Board.

In 2016 ADI converted to a Company Limited by Guarantee under the Companies Act, 2014, so we are now officially Arts & Disability Ireland CLG. As part of this process we adopted a new constitution in line with guidance issued by the Arts Council. We also appointed a chartered accountant to the role of Company Secretary. We are registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority and have adopted financial reporting procedure FRS102 in advance of an eventual move to the Charities SORP (Statement of Recommended Practice for Financial Reporting by Charities).

Development priorities for 2017–2021

Board and governance priorities

We aim to:

* increase the number of Board members from five to seven, of whom no fewer than three will be people with disabilities
* introduce a Board skills audit to assist with future recruitment
* establish a three-year term of service for Board members, with an option for reappointment for one additional term of three years
* adopt SORP (Statement of Recommended Practice for Financial Reporting by Charities) for financial reporting and audit purposes.

Human resource priorities

We aim to:

* update and review staff agreements regularly
* complement staff skills by engaging external consultants when necessary
* encourage suitably qualified people with disabilities to apply when we are recruiting new staff, freelancers or interns, while also following best practice as an equal opportunities employer.

Location priorities

Since 2010, ADI has occupied offices in the Sean O’Casey Centre in Dublin’s Docklands. We know that, in order to fulfil our role as a growing national development and resource organisation, we need to become more visible and accessible both to the arts and the disability communities.

During the lifetime of **Leading Change in Arts and Culture** we will explore opportunities for moving to a more central location, while maintaining full accessibility for staff and visitors with disabilities.

Funding priorities

ADI is committed to diversifying its funding streams beyond the arts sector, by seeking funding and sponsorship from corporate and philanthropic organisations, State agencies and local authorities.

We aim to:

* develop an active funding strategy to help us apply for funding from a diverse range of sources
* identify prospective funders and use the help of our champions and Board members to familiarise them with ADI, its vision and services
* develop a package of possible sponsorship opportunities for prospective funders
* amalgamate our access services into a branded offer that will enhance visibility and quality, which in turn will help us seek new, specific funding to support the development of this service.

Our funders and partners

**Principal funder**

The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon

We would like to acknowledge the commitment and support given to Arts & Disability Ireland by past board members, former staff, artists, audiences, venues, organisations, institutions, local authorities and programme partners.

**Thank you to all our programme partners 2011–2016**

The Abbey Theatre

Accessible Arts (AUS)

An Grianán Theatre

The Ark

Arts & Disability Forum (NI)

Arts Access Australia

Arts Access Victoria (AUS)

The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon

Arts with the Disabled Association Hong Kong

Away With Words

Axis: Ballymun

Backstage Theatre

Ballina Arts Centre

Aideen Barry

Blue Teapot Theatre Company

Bord Gáis Energy Theatre

British Council Ireland

Butler Gallery

Jez Colborne (UK)

COPE Foundation

Cork City Council

Cork Midsummer Festival

Cork Opera House

Corn Exchange

Create – National development agency for collaborative arts

Croí Glan

Culture Night

DaDaFest (UK)

Dance Ireland

Dance Limerick

Deaf Hear

Department of VSA & Accessibility at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (USA)

Disability Arts International

Disability Federation Ireland

dlr/HSE Arts and Health Partnership

dlr Mill Theatre

dlr Social Inclusion Office

The DOCK

Draíocht

Dublin City Council

Dublin Dance Festival

Dublin Fringe Festival

Dublin Theatre Festival

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (dlr)

Embassy of the United States of America

The Everyman

Fire Station Artists’ Studios

Firkin Crane

Fishamble: The New Play Company

Galway 2020

Galway Arts Centre

Galway City Council

Galway County Council

GASP Studios

Graeae Theatre Company (UK)

Heart n Soul (UK)

Highlanes Gallery

Inclusion Ireland

Irish Deaf Society

Irish Film Institute

IMMA (Irish Museum of Modern Art)

Irish Writers Centre

KCAT

Knowbility (USA)

The LAB Gallery

LEAD (USA)

Lime Tree Theatre

Limerick City Gallery of Art

Simon McKeown (UK)

Mayfield Arts Centre

Mayo County Council

Milestone Inventive

Mind the Gap (UK)

National Council for the Blind Ireland

National Disability Authority

National Opera House

National Sculpture Factory

Near FM

Nun’s Island Theatre

Pavilion Theatre

Project Arts Centre

Regional Cultural Centre

Ridgepool Training Centre, Western Care

RTÉ

Scannán Technologies

Robert Softley (UK)

SoundOUT

Soundscape Music Project

Stagetext (UK)

Suisha Inclusive Arts

Telegael

That’s Life

Theatre Lovett

Touretteshero (UK)

Town Hall Theatre

Triskel Christchurch

Unlimited (UK)

Visual Artists Ireland

VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art & The George Bernard Shaw Theatre

Vo’Arte (PT)

Waterford Healing Arts Trust

WillFredd Theatre

With an F Productions

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