



Galway City Community Network
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Galway City Community Network CLG

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Galway City Community Network,

The Public Participation Network in Galway City

Submission on Draft Galway City Arts Strategy 2020-2025

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Underpinning Principles
Resourcing
Spaces and Faculties
Access, Engagement and Cultural Rights

Preface

Established in 2014, **Galway City Community Network** (GCCN) is the Public Participation Network in Galway City. It represents groups and organisations in the community, voluntary and environmental sectors in Galway City. The twin objectives that GCCN pursues are to:



- Advance the values of sustainability, equality, culture, community, empowerment and inclusivity and embed these in the policies, programmes and practice of local government, state organisations, national government and civil society.
- Develop and implement progressive models of and approaches to representation, participation and engagement for civil society in informing and shaping policy development and implementation.

As the Public Participation Network for Galway City this submission focuses primarily around the engagement of community, voluntary and environmental groups underlined by the ethos of equality and participation.

Context

At a national level, the Irish Government and the Arts Council recognise the centrality of arts and culture to Irish Society. This was particularly acknowledged in the Creative Ireland Programme which has placed Creative Communities as one of its main platforms. The recent report by Creative Ireland on *Engaging the Public on Climate Change through the Cultural and Creative Sectors 2019* has acknowledged the symbiosis and opportunities for climate activists and those involved in the creative community. The following Arts Council Strategies place importance on community engagement, diversity and equality: *Making Great Art Work (2016 – 2025)*, *Equality, Human Rights and Diversity [EHRD] Policy*, *Arts and Disability Policy* and *Cultural Diversity and the Arts*.

The Arts Council names Public Engagement as one of its five goals in *Making Great Art Work (201 – 2025)*. Amongst the actions named under public engagement are capacity building and the recognition of social diversity (pg. 24). In order for this to be realistically reflected in Galway City Arts Strategy GCCN calls for community engagement to be resourced and recognised.

Submission

Galway City Community Network welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to Galway City Arts Office on *Galway City Arts Strategy 2020 - 2025*.

Galway City Community Network facilitates an Arts and Culture Linkage Group, members of which are drawn from and represent a variety of cross-sectoral interests in the community, voluntary and environmental sectors.

The submission is based on consultation with the GCCN members that included a meeting of the GCCN Arts and Culture Linkage Group. It draws on [GCCN Policies & Positions](#) (see specifically p. 22-23) in relation to Arts and Culture that were developed collaboratively with GCCN members and the wider arts and culture community.

GCCN also encouraged and supported members to make their own submissions and supports the submission made by the Disability Federation of Ireland to the *Galway Arts Strategy 2020 – 2025*.

Underpinning Principles

Galway City has developed an Equality and Human Rights Statement to support compliance with the Public Sector Duty. **GCCN calls for:**

- The development of the Strategy based on the principles agreed by Galway City Council and outlined in the Galway City Equality and Human Rights Statement:
 - Dignity
 - Autonomy
 - Participation
 - Inclusion
 - Social justice
 - Environmental Justice
- A Strategy that overtly names communities based on the nine grounds of the equality legislation and extended to socio-economic disadvantage. We strongly advocate that all funding for arts is measured against social inclusion and the promotion of equality. These need to be assessed, measured and reviewed throughout the time frame of the plan.
- The Galway Arts Strategy to focus on communities as being producers and collaborators, and not just consumers, in the areas of arts practice and delivery. In this context, GCCN calls for a specific focus on marginalised and disadvantaged groups and communities.
- An Equality and Human Rights impact assessment to be carried out at the final draft stage of Galway City Arts Strategy in order to be in compliance with Public Sector Duty.
- A strategy that actively acknowledges the linkages between arts, culture, environmental concerns and concerns for physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Access, Engagement and Cultural Rights.

Everybody Matters: A Cultural Sustainability Strategy Framework for Galway 2016 – 2025* states that in order to promote greater access and engagement targeted inclusion measures need to take place based on inclusion and participation and commits to facilitating greater access to and engagement with culture through targeted participation. A commitment was also made to engage with communities who experience inequality and exclusion in the *Local Economic and Community Plan 2020-2021* and this needs to be built on. **GCCN calls for:*

- A Charter of Cultural Rights be a prioritised as a core component of Galway City Arts Strategy.
- Targeted initiatives to ensure access, engagement and the creation of the conditions for communities, particularly marginalised communities, to exercise their cultural rights.
- The inclusion of representatives that will ensure the issues affecting marginalised communities and the community, voluntary and environmental sectors are represented in all working groups that are to be tasked with progressing actions under the Arts Strategy. This is to further enhance engagement across a wider spectrum and so allow for a cross pollination of ideas.

Resourcing

Adequate resourcing of arts and culture required adequate levels of resourcing. GCCN calls for:

- Improved coordination and allocation of arts resources through the Galway City Arts Strategy.
- A commitment to resourcing and supporting existing and new community arts projects that have public engagement and socially led practices as core principles.
- The recognition of the beneficial impact of art on both an emotional, mental and physical wellbeing level as an opportunity to build on new and innovative projects. GCCN calls for the continued funding of the Healthy Galway Arts and Mental Health initiative as a way to further engage and promote collaborations between the delivery of art and health & wellbeing.
- The recognition of the links between arts and culture and environmental corners and a funding stream to support initiatives.

Spaces and Facilities

Spaces and facilities for arts and culture need to be developed in Galway City and extend beyond the city centre to surrounding communities. GCCN calls for:

- A universally accessible and flexible cultural space to house the many arts and cultural groups active in the city. The design and development of the cultural space should involve the active participation of arts, culture and community groups and organisations.
- A plan to look at the provision of spaces to groups both outside of the City Centre and in open public spaces to engage in art practices.
- The progression of a plan to develop St Anne's, Taylors Hill into a children's creative hub that should include an archaeological survey.
- Existing Galway City Council buildings, such as Galway Arts Centre, to be maintained and renovated based on the principles of universal accessibility.
- GCCN advocates for the recognition of the need for Galway City Arts Strategy to reflect the changing demographics in Galway City in line with the commitment in the Arts Council Strategy that identified *Spatial and Demographics Planning* as a main goal.
- GCCN calls for a revision of the Busking Bye-laws that were implemented by GCC. This is based on the submission GCCN itself made and the voluntary code of conduct submitted by the Galway City Busking Community.

Conclusion

Galway City Community Network believes in the capacity of the arts in bringing people and communities together. We welcome the opportunity to submit this document based on the enhancement of what we see as public engagement & participation with a commitment to equality and diversity in the arts in Galway City.