

Wexford Arts Centre Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026



www.wexfordartscentre.ie

"Wexford Arts Centre, over all the years, has been a beacon of light. In art, film, theatre, dance, music, it has enriched the life and the imagination of Wexford town. It is one of the great achievements in Irish culture life over the past half century"

Colm Tóibín, Laureate for Irish Fiction

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A NOTE FROM ROSEMARY HARTIGAN CHAIRPERSON, WEXFORD ARTS CENTRE

Wexford Arts Centre has stood in the heart of Wexford town for over four decades. It has survived economic highs and lows, educated, supported, and hosted innumerable artists, and encouraged generations of children to pursue their dreams, either professionally or through the thriving amateur arts community in Wexford and beyond.

During the worst of the global pandemic of 2020/21, even when the doors were closed, programs ran, providing an outlet for artists and a distraction for audiences. Over the years, Wexford Arts Centre has grown and developed to fulfil the needs of the new Ireland. Our reach is broad and yet, we keep stretching, endeavouring to meet the requirements of our growing community.

Our reputation in the Arts community is to be envied. We have welcomed international artists with the same warmth as that received by our home grown talent.

Our new extension enables us to welcome people of all abilities to enjoy excellent programming; for artists and performers to have comfort while rehearsing, and for our staff to have a safe, modern and accessible workspace. The new space reflects the growth in our population as well as the increasing need for creative spaces; a space to challenge, sooth or expand the mind.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank the Wexford Arts Centre team, led so ably by Elizabeth Whyte, for their commitment to WAC's vision; for their consistently warm welcome, and their resilience, particularly over the past two years. To the Board members who preceded us, thank you, To the current Board, a million thanks for your dedication and support.

We look forward to the next five years and beyond, as Wexford Arts Centre continues to flourish in its support of the cultural heartbeat of this community.

As we enter 2022 full of hope for the future, it's a time to reflect on what we have achieved over Wexford Arts Centre's 48 years and to consider the opportunities and challenges for the organisation in the years ahead. We have firmly established and positioned Wexford Arts Centre as Wexford's key cultural resource in supporting, nurturing, and developing artistic work, contextualising it in our communities and serving as an artistic touchstone in the town and county. We believe that members of all ages in the Wexford community should have access to a contemporary arts programme to inspire, innovate and challenge the creative thought process. To support this belief, excellence is at the centre of all of our arts programmes with an emphasis on contemporary arts practice, participation and education and inspiring creativity in the Wexford community.

INTRODUCTION

BY ELIZABETH WHYTE,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CEO WEXFORD ARTS CENTRE



Our artistic policy focuses on the delivery of high quality arts experiences across artforms in the community while also supporting the development of artists, their practices and their engagement with the public at a local, national and international level.

Our programming includes all contemporary art forms: visual art: painting, sculpture, photography, multi-disciplinary installations, video and film, public art and performance pieces in theatre, literature, dance, live art, video and film, traditional, jazz, electronic, classical and popular music, circus and street performance including live and online access.

The context in which this strategy is developed, marks the start of a new decade, a time of great change that includes acceleration of the environmental crisis and the sweep of Covid-19 global pandemic, bringing to the fore the everyday concern for the health of our communities and our society. This has utterly transformed so many aspects of our lives and is giving us a chance to reset, reflect and rethink our ways of being in the world. It is creating opportunities for change in how we live, how we work, how we consume, how we move around and how we behave towards each other.

Can this bring us greater awareness of our own and others identities, consideration of difference and cultural diversity, connections with our communities and respect and protection for our natural environment?

At Wexford Arts Centre, we wish to continue with engaging and collaborating with our audience through nurturing public participation in our artistic programme. The new capital developments will provide further access and opportunities to engage diverse communities with our vibrant programme within especially for those in the community with physical disabilities who previously had limited access. We will continue to embed our artistic programme within the community through longer term residency and commissions opportunities with artists. Participatory programmes are mutually beneficial, they embolden us to reach out and innovate while specifically targeting and fulfilling our public service function.

It is already apparent that Covid-19 has accelerated society into an automated, digital future, with a necessitated rise in the use of digital technologies for work, education, entertainment and more (remote working, online teaching and learning, online performances etc), forcing us to rethink our ways of working and connecting. A large cohort of our population is aging; another cohort is emerging, highly literate in new technologies and global trends. How do we continue to create experiences that speak authentically to our changing demographics and the economic and social reality of post-Covid Ireland?

The implications of the global pandemic are as yet unimaginable, but we may anticipate challenging and indeed, exciting times ahead for us, as a society and economy.



1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

“Venues provide a solid infrastructure of critical importance for the arts nationally. As focal points for arts activities, they help communities to develop a voice and they provide opportunities for investment in the creative energies and skills of future generations.”

The Arts Council

Wexford Arts Centre is Ireland’s oldest regional arts centre in operation since 1974 and is firmly established as an integral part of Wexford and Ireland’s cultural landscape. The Arts Centre has worked tirelessly to build and maintain a reputation for artistic excellence and accessibility, providing a year-round, vibrant arts programme, initiated and presented across all art forms and in particular in visual arts and theatre. A particular emphasis is placed on contemporary art practice for all in County Wexford.

The centre has grown and expanded through planned outreach projects, locally, nationally and internationally. These are designed and delivered through partnerships with Wexford County Council, managing Presentation Centre, Enniscorthy and supporting development and management of Creative Hub Studios. Wexford Arts Centre oversees the Living Art Education programme in schools as well as delivering on national and international tours with support of Arts Council and Culture Ireland of visual art exhibitions and theatre productions and developing the prestigious Emergence Award programme.



1.2 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

As the arts centre approaches its fiftieth anniversary, the Board, staff, founding partners and supporters can reflect with pride on many great achievements:

- » Approximately three million people have visited Wexford Arts Centre since it opened, drawn from throughout the County and beyond.
- » It has supported over 2000 artists a year within its programme including development supports and through Emergence Award, Make/Curate, Wexford Playwright and artist in residence programmes.
- » It has toured theatre productions and visual art exhibitions nationally and internationally to critical acclaim.
- » It has initiated a network of venue producers in the South East with the aim of supporting artists in the southeast through bursary awards and presenting work on the touring circuit.
- » Wexford Arts Centre has retained a loyal annual audience of over 60,000 in the face of the exceptional two years caused by the arrival of the Covid 19 pandemic in March 2002.
- » It is widely regarded as an excellent resource for the local community and it has had a major impact at a social, cultural and economic level.
- » It is viewed by peers and funders as a very successful model of good practice in terms of programme, professionalism, marketing, branding and customer service.

1.3 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Wexford Arts Centre’s turnover has grown to €679,000 over the past 3 years of the previous plan. 32% is earned through ticket sales, rentals, merchandising and sponsorship. Careful financial management has resulted in break-even annual budgets in recent years despite the many risks and uncertainties, which prevail in the sector. The main source of grant funding remains the Arts Council, which contributed 25% of income in 2021 with an increase of 28% promised for 2022. Wexford County Council would also be a key funding partner through provision of management support for Presentation Centre, Creative Hub, Living Arts programmes and Wexford County Hall Street exhibitions accounting for 24% of turnover. Department of Social Protection clearly value the opportunities which Wexford Arts Centre has to offer and the high level of progression from CE Schemes which has been achieved over the years can be clearly seen in the number of staff who are retained over time by the Arts Centre. Other key funding partners are Pobal and Wexford Local Development for key projects.

1.4 MOVING ON

Wexford Arts Centre’s Board and staff are keen to set new goals and take on new challenges to ensure that the Arts Centre’s impact within the community continues to grow in the years ahead. The purpose of this strategic document is to consider current issues and to identify new ambitions and targets within a strategic plan for the future development of the Arts Centre. Consultation with key stakeholders within the planning process has helped Wexford Arts Centre to identify priority objectives, which will build on progress and achievements to date:

- » Build on Wexford Arts Centre’s successful track record as in curating, producing and presenting visual art exhibitions in the region, renewing and reinforcing the supports which exist for art form development and practice including for example the Emergence Award, Make/Curate programme, Wexford Playwrights Studio and Wexford Playwriting award within the programme and increasing the involvement of professional artists and other creative partners.
- » Grow and diversify audiences for the Arts Centre’s programme of activities including a special series of events to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary in 2024. Also to increase Wexford Arts Centre’s impact and nurture a greater sense of ownership throughout the whole County.
- » Wexford, whilst a thriving town is also recognised as having pockets of disadvantage spread throughout the county. Wexford Arts Centre has a vital role to play in creating and delivering programmes which enable a diverse audience that includes young people and disadvantaged communities to engage and participate in the programmes of the Arts Centre.

1.5 STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

The greatest threat to Wexford Arts Centre’s ambitions, output and impact is the changing economic climate and uncertainty in relation to the funding environment. Levels of grant support for the Arts Centre were at a standstill for several years, putting considerable pressure on the Arts Centre’s resources. In recent years, however, the Centre’s Arts Council and public funding has grown and consolidated. Wider economic pressures will start to take their toll and the Arts Centre’s overall running cost will see an escalation in the coming year.

Increased competition for audiences in the South East takes place against a backdrop of the lockdown of the past two years and reduced spending power, both of which present challenges in terms of audience development and sustainability. The small core team of full-time professionals at Wexford Arts Centre is at full capacity in planning and delivery of the current programme combined with management responsibilities inherent in running two sites – in Wexford town and at Presentation Centre in Enniscorthy. There appears to be little scope to introduce and sustain additional activity within the current resource package.

1.6 CONCLUSION

There is clearly huge potential for Wexford Arts Centre to grow and flourish - to grasp new creative opportunities, to engage with new audiences, and to raise the profile of Wexford’s vibrant cultural life on a national and international level. However, additional resources are necessary to support further artistic and operational growth. Achieving the exciting new objectives and increased outputs identified in the strategic plan will require careful and planned investment of additional human and financial resources. Wexford Arts Centre faces the twin challenges of both increasing and diversifying grant funding and other income streams and will need the support of new and existing partners to achieve this.



Wexford Arts Centre is located in the iconic Cornmarket building, which was constructed in 1775. It forms an integral part of the fabric of Wexford Town and has been open since 1974.

The Arts Centre faces a future full of possibility with a widespread acknowledgement of the need for provision of increased and enhanced cultural and performance space. Wexford County Council, in partnership with Wexford Arts Centre, has secured funding from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media for renovation works to the building which are currently underway.

Wexford County Council has committed to providing matching funding for this project valued at €2.5 million and to project manage the delivery of the enhanced access and modernised Wexford Arts Centre with a projected opening date in October 2022.

Wexford Arts Centre is renowned for its visual arts spaces and programmes, and provides a flexible theatre space, hosting a wide range of performances across artforms, with a particular focus on theatre and music. It also presents visual art exhibitions in two well-appointed spaces alongside a creative engagement programme for all ages across many art forms but in particular visual arts, theatre and music.

It supports an impressive range of professional, semi-professional and community developed creative work throughout the year. Wexford Art Centre is well known for its care of visiting artists, the warmth of its welcome and hospitality and its beautifully intimate performance space, making it a popular space for local, national and international visiting artists. Wexford Arts Centre has been an important space in supporting local and emerging artists and its intimate space is well suited to smaller to medium scale touring theatre, music performances, readings and a great space to platform new work. Wexford Arts Centre has also established strong local engagement and consistently achieves upwards of 70% audience capacity for performances and increasing engagement with its community through its outreach programmes.

It serves the population of its vicinity very well and equally serves Enniscorthy and the wider southeast region as an arts venue and cornerstone of Wexford's visitor experience. Wexford Arts Centre also outreaches programme and access to the arts and artist development through partnerships with Wexford County Council including management of Presentation Centre Enniscorthy, Creative Hub studios for artists in Wexford town and through the Living Arts programme in schools countywide. The Emergence Award initiated by Wexford Arts Centre also in partnership with Wexford County Council and supported by Arts Council has prestigious national recognition with many awardees progressing to enhanced national and international recognition.



To be effective and relevant to the essential arts infrastructure in Ireland, Wexford Arts Centre has closely aligned itself to the national policy context of the Arts Council. It has broadened and diversified its approaches to supporting artists. There is a natural alignment between the Arts Council's strategic policy area of public engagement, enabling more people around the country to enjoy high quality arts experiences (Arts Council Strategy - Making Great Art Work).

The shift from traditional models of venues as platforming and presentation houses only, now sees arts centres serve the function of supporting artists and the production of work, albeit within the limitations of their physical space, not to mention the necessity to completely rethink ways of working in light of Covid-19 pandemic.

Restrictions associated with Covid-19 highlight the need to maximise the opportunities presented by new and emerging technologies in terms of how we work with artists and engage and expand our audiences.

2.1 OUR VISION

To be recognised as a leading arts organisation in the development of innovative contemporary arts programming, practice and engagement on a countywide, regional, national and international level. To be synonymous with a programme which challenges, inspires and enriches the lives of the community we serve and which strengthens Wexford's visibility and reputational value as a key cultural destination as part of Ireland's Ancient East. To be a nationally significant space for the development and presentation of new, innovative and contemporary work in the arts.

2.2 OUR MISSION

We believe that everyone in Wexford, regardless of who they are or where they live, should have access to a contemporary arts programme that inspires, innovates and challenges.

To support this belief, we nurture the work of artists and make that vital connection between the work and its audience, comprised of communities of place and interest. Our continuing emphasis will be on contemporary visual art and performance practices, participation and engagement inspiring and intriguing audiences in Wexford. We nurture and grow youth, amateur and community arts by providing space and management support for workshops, rehearsals and performances.

2.3 OUR VALUES

The core values which inform all aspects of Wexford Arts Centre's work are: integrity, warmth, relevance connection, inclusion, accessibility partnership, artist centred, innovation, sustainability, good governance and transparency and creative excellence.

We believe passionately that the arts are for every single person in our community and pride ourselves in a vibrant, dynamic creative environment that inspires and engages artists, nurtures a diverse audience and is firmly rooted in and dedicated to the life of its community in Wexford town and County.

2.4 OUR WORK

We implement our mission by:

- » Programming a dynamic, ambitious, high-quality programme across all artforms.
- » Platforming / presenting and producing or co-producing the work of artists and organisations/festivals that share our values, examples of which include our Four Rivers partnership and initiating and sharing exhibitions and tours with other venues.
- » Nurturing creative talent and ambition and supporting professional development of artists at all stages of their careers.
- » Fostering an actively engaged creative community by providing opportunities for participation in artistic and creative activity / endeavour, accessible to diverse audiences (across age, ability, and access).
- » Establishing partnerships with organisations at local, regional and national level, to progress/deliver our shared ambitions.



3

MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE



3.1 BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

The Board of Management is chaired by Rosemary Hartigan with expertise in community and cultural heritage and includes a wide range of arts, cultural and managerial expertise.

BOARD MEMBERS

Ben Barnes
Oliver Comerford

Michael D'Arcy
Tom Enright
John Everett
Ann Hensman
Maria Nolan
Craig O'Toole

KEY SKILLS

Theatre Director/Artistic Director Venues
Wexford School of Art and Design, IT Carlow, academia and Visual Artist
Musician/IMRO expertise
CEO Wexford County Council
Community organisation finance and fundraising
Governance
HR procurement and Law
Finance and business

3.2 STAFFING

Wexford Arts Centre's achievements would not have been possible without the hard work, enthusiasm and dedication of the Arts Centre's staff, both in Wexford town and Enniscorthy. It is important to note the very significant contribution played by Department of Social Welfare Community Employment and TUS Schemes in this regard. Wexford Arts Centre opened its doors in 1974 with just one full-time core staff member. There has been a small increase in the number of staff to facilitate growth in activity levels and Wexford Arts Centre now employs nine full time staff plus five part time core staff. In addition there are four CE scheme staff at Wexford Arts Centre who cover front of house and maintenance, box office and technical duties and three TUS Funded posts deployed across the Presentation Centre in Enniscorthy for front of house and cleaning duties. The current staffing structure of Wexford Arts Centre is detailed on (organogram) page 48.

3.4 BAR AND CAFE

Wexford Arts Centre's cafe facilities are staffed by the franchisee, D'Lush. An excellent café. Wexford Arts Centre's bar for events is currently a temporary set up but will be a fixed feature of the new extension.

4

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2018-2021



There is consensus amongst stake-holders that Wexford Arts Centre is a very successful operational model. Key achievements in recent years are:

4.1 ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

- » Provision of a balanced and diverse year-round arts programme which continues to maintain a high standard of artistic integrity. Over 60,000 people enjoyed exhibitions and events at Wexford Arts Centre in 2019 (pre pandemic) with many more daytime visitors attending launches and exhibitions and enjoying the Arts Centre's cafe facilities.
- » Continuing commitment to art form development through Make/Curate programmes and Wexford Playwrights/Theatre Studio and creative partnership by producing and presenting visual arts and professional theatre productions e.g Four Rivers co-production model across Ireland and in particular the South East and supporting dance/circus/street performance residencies through LIFT programme in association with ISACS (Irish Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle network).
- » Successful Visual Art partnership tours including Breaking Rainbows by Orla Barry with Temple Bar Galleries as part of Dublin Theatre Festival, Performatik 17: The Brussels Biennial of Performance Art and the Argos Centre for Arts and Media, Brussels and Crawford Gallery as part of Cork Midsummer Festival and Skin Deep by Mary Ruth Walsh with High Lanes Gallery and Limerick City Gallery.
- » Successful playwriting commissions and tours including Wexfour with John Banville, Eoin Colfer, Billy Roche and Colm Toibín (Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris and Origin 1st Irish Theatre Festival, Lincoln Centre New York) The Scourge by Michelle Dooley Mahon (First Fortnight national tour and Origin 1st Irish Theatre Festival New York).
- » Proactively working in partnership with other arts organisations including Wexford County Council's Arts Department, Wexford Local Development, Music Generation, Wexford Festival Opera and County Wexford Youth Theatre.
- » Curating and producing public art projects including Wexford Whale project in association with artist Helen Mclean and Brightening Air Festival in 2021 and Enniscorthy Walls Project also in 2021.
- » Promoting community arts engagement in association with Lions Club for annual community exhibition, Red Moon/Theatre works after school programmes, One Voice Festival with Paul Walsh Productions and support for amateur drama organisations including Wexford Drama, Bridge Drama, Ballycogley Players and Enniscorthy Drama and engaging professional artists with communities through artist in residence programmes e.g. Laura Hyland music artist in resident with Wildsong Ensemble, Melanie O'Reilly, Jazz artist in Residence, Heather Hadrill, Artist in residence, theatre, Stephen James Smith, Spoken Word artist in residence.

4.2 MARKETING AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

- » Maintenance of a loyal audience base within an increasingly competitive local environment.
- » Quality customer service provision – Wexford Arts Centre is known for its friendly and open customer service and artists’ care.
- » Successful rebranding exercise resulting in new corporate logo in 2019.
- » Development of Wexford Arts Centre’s website, online ticketing and engagement with online content during the lockdowns of the past two years.
- » Improvements to exterior signage now possible with new extended building opening in summer 2022. This may enable the creation of a high profile, kerbside digital display sign allowing the arts centre to promote up to date information on the Arts Centre events and activities to commuters and passers-by.
- » Re-launch of and increased participation in Arts Centre’s Friends Scheme.
- » Major capital works programme to create a disability access should be extended to main building which is in need to repair.
- » Improved comfort and convenience for patrons with disabilities through the addition of disability friendly access, extra seating in the main auditorium, installation of lift to the upper level.
- » Installation throughout the building of new highly visual signage which is more suitable for people with disabilities.

4.3 EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

- » Living Arts programme in schools across the county and continuous programme of workshops and participatory opportunities on both sites – Wexford Arts Centre and Presentation Centre, Enniscorthy including online activities during Covid 19 restrictions.
- » High progression rate through the CE scheme and TUS scheme and continued success in delivering key outputs.
- » Development of Creative Youth Lab for youth to explore and experiment across all art forms.
- » Youth Sessions in Music in association with Music Generation Wexford
- » Community participation engagement in partnership with artists in residence across all artforms in particular, music, visual arts, theatre and literature.

4.4 STAFFING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- » Increased levels of financial support since 2018 from key funding partners the Arts Council and Wexford County Council and Pobal.
- » Maintaining annual growth in key earned income streams including box office and rental income.
- » Success in accessing project and capital grants with the assistance of the Arts Council and Wexford County Council.
- » Achieving annual break-even position on operational accounts.
- » Significant improvements in terms and conditions for employees.
- » Developing Fundraising Strategy plan and case for support with RAISE mentorship.





CONTEXT

5.1 SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

County Wexford boasts a rich and diverse geography as well as a long tradition in agriculture with its name as Ireland's 'Model County'. With nearby access to the Greater Dublin Area, key settlements in Wexford have a large population in proximity (280,000 within one hour of Wexford Town, 505,000 within one hour drive from Gorey). The location of Rosslare Europort is a key access route into Ireland from Europe and the UK. Wexford is the 13th most populated Local Authority in Ireland and the population has increased by over 10% in the last five years. Increasing levels in the young age cohorts is a positive sign and suggests a new demographic vibrancy for large parts of the county in the coming years. The agricultural sector remains strong with 8.4% of the all workers employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing which was significantly higher than the State average of 5.1%.

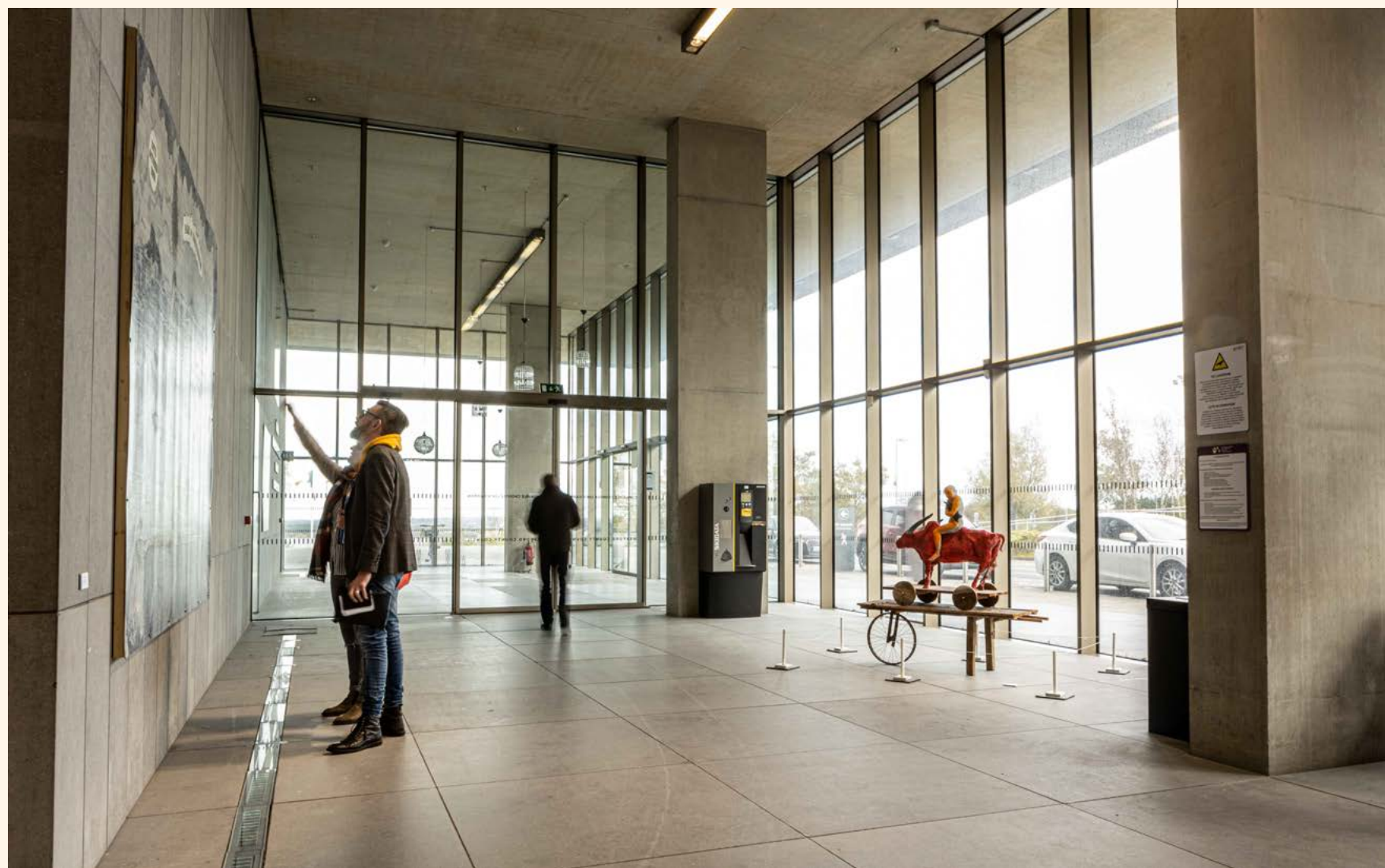
These sectors are important revenue and employment generators in the county's coastal and rural areas and play an integral role in maintaining the social fabric of these areas. The 'non-national population' in the county continues to grow and this is contributing to cultural diversity. This is primarily the case in the main urban settlements for New Ross, Enniscorthy, Wexford Town and Gorey. That said, County Wexford has the 4th lowest 'Non-Irish National' rate in the country with only 9.4% of its population originating from outside Ireland. The county has however witnessed the numbers of 'Non-Irish Nationals' increasing by 153% (+8,143) from 2002. This rate of increase is considerably higher than the State average of +142%, and provides a significant opportunity for increased inclusivity and cultural diversity.

Wexford has high rates of early school leavers with 18.5% of those who have completed their education with no Formal/Primary education and 20.7% with a Lower Secondary education. These rates are well above the State averages of 15.2% and 16.6% respectively. In contrast, Wexford has the third lowest rate of third level education in the country with only 20.9% of those who have completed education with third level qualifications. This is well below the State average of 29.1%.

5.2 ARTS INFRASTRUCTURE

Wexford's arts infrastructure has experienced a transformation over the last decade. The County Council's Arts Service, the National Opera House, Wexford Festival Opera, The Presentation Centre in Enniscorthy, Cow House Studios and the thriving voluntary arts community are just some of the key players who have shaped the busy and vibrant arts scene currently enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.

Wexford Arts Centre is the oldest regional arts centre in the country. The wider arts infrastructure has changed dramatically since it opened in 1974 and venue provision in the South East region continues to evolve and expand. This changing environment has to be a key factor in any strategic and business planning, particularly with regard to audience development and target marketing. The Arts Centre is currently undergoing a capital development which will upgrade its facilities generally, increase access for the population (in particular addressing disability access). This presents an opportunity for general upgrade of the facilities of the existing historic building which is well used and well worn. Replacement of windows and general cosmetic upgrades internally are overdue and the need for these will be amplified when the old is inevitably compared to the 'new'.



5.3 POLICY AND FUNDING

Wexford Arts Centre Strategic Plan 2022 to 2026 will closely align with those of our key local and national partners including:

5.3.1 WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL

The Council has a statutory duty to develop the County's cultural life in partnership with a range of other public and community agencies. Wexford was one of the first local authorities to appoint an arts officer and each arts officer has in turn been active and engaged in arts provision throughout the county. The County Council has played a pivotal role in support of the arts and in local arts promotion since the 1980s. Wexford County Council has been a key driver behind major developments within the cultural infrastructure in County Wexford and is project managing the extension to Wexford Arts Centre, currently underway.

Wexford County Council Development Plan 2013-2019 relevant to Wexford Arts Centre – Trinity Wharf Development. “Revitalising, regenerating and facilitating the redevelopment of the core urban centre of Wexford Town for the benefit of the town’s employees, local residents and visitors alike”.

5.3.2 COUNTY WEXFORD ARTS PLAN

Wexford County Council’s Arts plan Advancing the Arts 2018 -22 set out an ambitious programme, building on the already quite established arts infrastructure in the county and strong community of artists and key stakeholders engaged in the arts. In order to give focus and drive to arts development in the county, themes of “The Artist” and “Public Engagement with the Arts” underpinned this strategy, these are aligned with six higher level goals of Wexford’s Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016 -2021. These goals include:

- » Support and promote the development of socially inclusive, sustainable communities in County Wexford and ensure that all citizens enjoy optimal health and well-being.
- » Foster a culture of educational attainment and lifelong learning in County Wexford.
- » Continue to develop and promote County Wexford as a great place to live, work, play visit.
- » Develop and market County Wexford as an outstanding business environment for starting, growing and attracting business.
- » Continue to protect and enhance our infrastructure in order to create the right conditions for long-term sustainable economic growth.
- » Protect and sensitively utilise our natural, built and cultural heritage and together with the Arts, realise their economic potential.
- » Provide supports for artists at all stages in their careers, enabling them to make great work that can be enjoyed by all.

Wexford County Council Arts Plan – Advancing the Arts 2018-2020 impacting Wexford Arts Centre.

- » Engaging the Public in the arts both as participants and audience.
- » Enabling collaboration and new partnerships that build capacity and infrastructure in the arts sector.
- » Enriching quality of life, quality of place and quality of employment through the arts.

In addition to the Arts Office core arts plan, the Creative Ireland Programme 2017-2022, also led by Wexford County Council impacts Wexford Arts Centre:

The five pillars that underpin Creative Ireland strategy are:

1. Enabling the Creative Future of Every Child
2. Creative Communities - Enabling creativity in every community
3. Cultural Investment - Investing in our creative and cultural Infrastructure
4. Creative Industries - Ireland as a centre of creative excellence
5. Global Reputation - A Creative and Cultural Nation

Department Of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media policies directly relevant to Wexford Arts Centre.

Culture 2025 – National Cultural Framework nurturing creativity, boosting citizen participation, helping more people to follow a sustainable career in the cultural sector, promoting Ireland’s cultural wealth and ensuring a cultural contribution to wider social and economic goals.

Arts and Cultural Capital Schemes:

- » Strategic larger enhancement/ expansion /refurbishment projects involving construction works to premises.
- » Trends in cross over artforms and development and presentation of art in non-traditional space and format.
- » Demands for space to develop rather than present: studio spaces, rehearsal spaces, management and advisory support.

5.3.4 THE ARTS COUNCIL

The strategic context for the Arts Council’s support of arts centres and all other artforms and areas of arts practice is set out in Making Great Art Work: Arts Council Strategy (2016 –2025) The Arts Council strategy has five priority areas: the artist; public engagement; investment strategy; spatial and demographic planning; and developing capacity.

The Arts Council currently provides programming and revenue supports to almost fifty arts centres throughout the country. Critical to the support provided by the Arts Council is the support provided by local authorities, which is instrumental in ensuring that a stable and vibrant venue network can be maintained.

Arts Centres are regarded as focal points for arts activities, they help communities to develop an artistic voice and they provide opportunities for investment in the creative energies and skills of future generations. Arts Centres have developed as much more than "receiving houses" for touring productions. Many have specialised in particular artforms and practices and it is to the benefit of audiences and artists that work is disseminated as widely and as cost-effectively as possible.

The Arts Council’s policy statement for venues states:
“Venues provide a solid infrastructure of critical importance for the arts nationally. As focal points for arts activities, they help communities to develop a voice and they provide opportunities for investment in the creative energies and skills of future generations.”

The Council sees its role as an accessible development agency and partner, ensuring that:
“There is a network of well-designed, well-maintained, well-managed and sustainable arts venues across the country capable of providing a wide-ranging and varied programme of high-quality arts activities.”

Making Great Art Work 2016-2025 - Arts Councils priorities for Wexford Arts Centre
The Arts Council wishes to ensure funded venues provide:

- » The delivery of excellent art and/or excellent arts activities, events and services
- » A supportive environment for the development of the arts.
- » Excellent professional development opportunities for practising artists and/or arts professionals.
- » That more people will enjoy high quality arts experiences, including more diverse audiences.
- » Increased engagement by the public with the arts, in particular by new communities, people for whom access to the arts is difficult, and by young people and children.
- » Standards of excellence in governance and management in the arts.

5.3.5 WIDER ECONOMY

Economic forecasts predict that the rate of growth in Ireland will be consistent in the short to medium term but with the growing risk of high and still-rising levels of household costs and increasing inflation particularly as regards fuel and rising food prices. These will inevitably affect consumer spending power in the coming months, the short to medium term. Wexford’s statutory and development agencies see a bright future for the county and are working to maximise economic opportunities, supported by the presence of Wexford Campus (IT Carlow) soon to be part of the South East Technological University, presence of a major port and proximity to road networks linking the county to Dublin. Culture is core to the economic offering and overall attractiveness of the county. Wexford Arts Centre is accessible to audiences all over the South East, is a venue for the internationally renowned Wexford Festival Opera and an arts centre which is widely known and respected nationally.





STRATEGIC GOALS 2022 - 2026



Taking full account of internal and external stakeholder contributions, the following key ambitions have been identified for the Arts Centre for the period:

6.1 OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SUPPORT/CREATE/INNOVATE

To support and work with artists to champion and facilitate the creation and development of new work, through innovative approaches and new ways of working (to produce, present and host a diverse programme of excellent contemporary art at local, national and international level with emphasis on delivery of a programme of/by and for all in Wexford. To support a diverse community of artists at all stages of their development with a particular emphasis on supporting emerging art practices through longer term partnerships i.e. residencies).

CONNECT

To strengthen relationships and connections with our communities of place / communities of interest (increase the depth and breadth of the public's engagement with Wexford Arts Centre's programmes, growing participation across new target audiences with emphasis on social inclusion). To establish Wexford Arts Centre as a model of good practice in the planning and delivery of a year-round programme of creative learning, education and outreach activities which enable young people and disadvantaged groups and communities to participate in the performing arts.

COMMUNICATE

Communicate our story with impact and give expression to the unique character and vibrancy of Wexford Arts Centre and the full scale and nature of its arts programme.

PARTNER

Develop cultural and cross sectoral partnerships and collaborations at local, regional and national level to support greater diversity and strengthen capacity in our work.

SUSTAIN

Renew our organisational capacity to ensure our future as a well-managed, well-governed and well-funded organisation.

FINANCE

To diversify and increase income streams in order to facilitate creative, physical and operational growth and development at Wexford Arts Centre.

6.2 STRATEGIC ISSUES

Research and consultation has identified a range of barriers and challenges which could impact on the theatre's ability to achieve its goals and ambitions:

- » **Public Funding.** Recent growth in Wexford Arts Centre's funding has been encouraging and vindicates the work of the Arts Centre. Without appropriate levels of subvention, arts organisations cannot achieve their full potential. Outputs and impact will be adversely affected and there will be limited scope for diverse and innovative arts programming.
- » **Wider Economic Pressures.** Wexford Arts Centre will have to deal with significant increases in costs in line with all organisations operating in the public sphere in the short to medium term e.g. from increases in energy and running costs due to inflation. The newly extended building will bring with it additional operational costs.
- » **Planning Horizon.** Most arts funding is administered to clients within a twelve month planning cycle. This makes it difficult for organisations to devise long-term programme and operational plans, which are essential to healthy growth and sustainability. Wexford Arts Centre hopes to be considered for multi annual funding in the upcoming funding cycle.
- » **Programme options.** The size and scale of Wexford Arts Centre's gallery and theatre are both its greatest advantage and disadvantage – they are ideally scaled for much of what is available on tour or produced with smaller venues in mind but it is too small for much of the medium to large scale touring theatre and performing arts that are likely to become available in the short to medium term.
- » **Art form Development.** Wexford Arts Centre's has a proven track record and continues in its ambition to develop and tour professional performing arts productions. It has demonstrated great success in this regard and there is clearly a gap in provision for venues of this size. However, the arts centre is under-resourced as it currently stands, lacking staff and finances to fully exploit this opportunity. There are also additional costs associated with attracting high quality visiting arts events to the area. The existing team is working to full capacity on planning, promotion and delivery of the current programme. There appears to be little scope to introduce and sustain additional activity within the current structure.
- » **Physical Environment.** Wexford Arts Centre is undergoing refurbishment at present and whilst it will have significantly enhanced facilities available once completed, the main building is now also in need of significant investment to bring it up to the standard of the newly constructed part.





WEXFORD ARTS CENTRE: DEVELOPMENT AND PRACTICE

GOAL – To support and work with artists to champion and facilitate the creation and development of new work, through innovative approaches and new ways of working

7.1 CURRENT BASELINE

Wexford Arts Centre provides local and visiting audiences with the opportunity to enjoy a range of exhibitions, creative engagement opportunities, music, film and performing arts events generated locally, nationally and internationally. The Centre's primary focus is the presentation and development of visual arts in particular and performing arts – mainly theatre, literature and music (Jazz / Contemporary) - its diverse twelve-month programme encompasses a wide range of other art forms including dance, street arts/circus, traditional and classical music, and a myriad of educational opportunities.

7.2 AMBITION

7.2.1 SUPPORT / CREATE / INNOVATE

Throughout 2022 to 2024 Wexford Arts Centre will adapt its approach to bringing new work to audiences; where applicable, it will leverage evolving digital technologies and the potential these bring. Wexford Arts Centre is well placed to facilitate the development of new and innovative approaches to supporting artists and bringing their work to audiences. As we emerge from an extended period of restrictions on the arts and live performance as we know them, Wexford Arts Centre will extend its range of supports through Arts Council and partner involvement, to develop new work through bursaries, commissions, residencies and projects with its focus as a 'creative hub' for the region.

Integral to the ambition of Wexford Arts Centre is its EDI policy which the Centre sees as essential to its ongoing role at the centre of the community in the South East, embracing and celebrating diversity. Its commitment is encapsulated in its EDI policy, the main principles and objectives of which are as follows:

- » Promote, facilitate and encourage arts and culture in the wider community.
- » Support social inclusion and diversity through the provision of accessible and participatory arts programmes, art reflecting or supporting minorities and art which challenges, educates and opens discussion.
- » encouraging and supporting artists with disabilities, of various ethnic origins, from different cultures, with different backgrounds, history, views and experience.
- » To improve communications and access provision at public events for everyone and to ensure that access is central to the delivery of each aspect of the work of Wexford Arts Centre.
- » To offer concessions to personal assistants accompanying individuals with disabilities.
- » Increase the active and creative participation of the public in the arts, focusing on inclusivity of all audiences especially minority or excluded audiences.
- » Grow and diversify the range of audiences and participants and build on skills of existing audiences through strategies like Visual Thinking. This can extend from WAC gallery space to online platforms.
- » Invest in and increase the quality of physical and digital access to the arts for everyone. Using communication strategies engaging audiences via digital education, live feeds, pod casts and online platforms. This will enhance and increase access by the community.
- » Continue to prioritise and enhance choice of children's and young people's access to creative expression through the arts as a vital feature of their daily lives.

The Arts Centre will continuously innovate in its approach to connecting the work of artists to audiences in the coming years, whether this is through live or online performances, discussions, readings, podcasts, or in safely managed indoor and outdoor spaces.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS 2022/24	ONGOING ACTIONS 2024-2026
Strengthen our capacity to support artists at different stages of creation, development, production and presentation of work.	<p>Review current resources to provide additional levels of artist supports and identify resource requirements to enable supports in line with ambition.</p> <p>Implement a programme of artist bursaries, commissions and residencies to support artists to develop new work in 2022 (in assoc. with Wexford Arts Office, Creative Ireland, Arts Council).</p> <p>Further develop partnerships and programmes with WCC including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Living Arts delivering access to contemporary visual art techniques in schools and providing mentor support to artists,• curation of exhibitions in County Council space,• partnering on Wexford Playwrights Development programme, the Emergence Award, the Wexford Playwrights Commission,• support for Creative Hub artist studios and Presentation Centre,• Culture night programming including Poetrytown in association with Poetry Ireland,• contribution to Cruinniú na nÓg activities for children and youth. <p>Establish new community artist's Residency to support innovative work and community engagement , marking the opening of the extended building and relaunch of the Arts Centre (topical, contemporary themes i.e community and environment).</p>	<p>Identify priority areas of work for bursaries, commissions and residencies at Wexford Arts Centre, across themes and artforms.</p> <p>50th Anniversary programme – deliver programme with links to established arts diaspora nationally and internationally to celebrate Wexford Arts Centre's impact as oldest regional arts centre since 1974.</p> <p>Work with Wexford Arts Office to develop the Presentation Centre's facilities for the production and presentation of work in Enniscorthy.</p>
Strengthen our capacity to programme in diverse contexts and spaces (beyond Wexford Arts Centre).	<p>Review our visual arts programme with a view to dedicated spaces & contexts for contemporary visual art practice.</p> <p>Source funding (AC) for pilot curator/Artist in residence programme to research and develop work in context, relevant to Wexford and for connecting education programme with arts programme.</p> <p>Look into potential to programme/ develop work outside during summer months (also potential to develop work in response to the space around Wexford Arts Centre with its extended facilities – new mezzanine gallery space – themed exhibitions around local culture and heritage with emphasis on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion).</p>	<p>Research and develop new programming contexts (e.g. Festivals, seminars etc.).</p> <p>Collaborate with.....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research potential of empty or underutilised spaces in the town for short term use. These could be used as studio or incubation space, for residencies, showcases/ exhibitions etc. (through Wexford County Council/Wexford Chamber of Commerce), Georgia Southern University Wexford Campus and South East Technological University.
Strengthen our capacity to programme work for dissemination to a national and global audience, to increase visibility of Wexford Arts Centre's programme beyond our region.	<p>Upgrade and invest in equipment and new technologies that enable the best in industry standards of audio visual production and dissemination, to enable live streaming and connecting to a global audience.</p>	<p>Support musicians and theatre artists to record work in the space (either video, audio or podcasts / radio plays).</p> <p>Produce broadcast quality audio podcasts to host conversations with artists, showcase new writing, new commissions.</p>
Build on Wexford's strong literary heritage to inspire contemporary work.	<p>Establish a new literature Development Programme to support the work and ambitions of practicing artists and community.</p>	<p>Research potential to commission a writer every year to engage with aspects of the lives of people in Wexford Town and County that are relevant and topical today (contemporary society).</p>

7.2.1 CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Wexford Arts Centre has been proactive in developing partnerships with like-minded arts organisations e.g. Four Rivers, resulting in a diverse range of co-productions and other joint initiatives. The Make/ Curate programme also allows for matching local artists with national curators for enhancing development of artists work and providing a platform for career networking. Creative partnerships enable the Arts Centre to share resources, expertise and creative energy in order to achieve its goals and increase its outputs. Forging partnerships is increasingly important within the current funding climate where artistic ambitions might otherwise be curtailed through lack of resources. Wexford Arts Centre will continue to identify and nurture creative partnerships on a local, national and international basis and explore any funding avenues that might open up as a result of such cooperation.

NOTE ON CLUSTERS FROM ARTS COUNCIL ARTS CENTRE POLICY 2019
CLUSTERS/NETWORKS

Larger arts centres will be encouraged to operate as cluster coordinators; they will be agents for the development, production and dissemination of work across a range of centres both locally and nationally. In order to do this support for their ‘productive capacity’ is needed to extend and intensify both audience engagement and artist support.

We will work with our partners, both the arts centres themselves and local authorities, as well partners within the broader cultural sector, libraries, national cultural institutions, etc., to promote innovation in ensuring connectivity, utilising new technologies, social innovation and partnership.





8.1 CURRENT BASELINE

Wexford Arts Centre's ongoing success in developing and maintaining audiences is evidence of an effective programming and marketing mix, and testimony to the considerable appetite for the arts within the region. Wexford Arts Centre has consistently achieved strong overall audience interaction and sustained a loyal customer base.

8.2 CONNECTING WITH AUDIENCES

Wexford Arts Centre is well placed to nurture artform development in aspects of visual arts, theatre/ playwriting, creative digital media etc. with various communities of interest. It is also well placed to highlight and celebrate the distinctive nature of Wexford and the South East, through facilitation and support of creative collaborations and connections between artists and the community.

GOAL:

To strengthen relationships and connections with our communities of place / communities of interest.



OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS 2022 – 2024	ACTIONS 2024 / 26
Strengthen our resource provision for community engagement in our arts education and outreach programme, through collaboration / partnership with other organisations.	Continue to nurture partnerships with Wexford County Council (WCC), Wexford Local Development, other Venues through our South East Venue Network (SEVN) and other arts agencies such as Music Generation, ISACS network, artists and touring arts organisations to ensure delivering programme that fulfills shared goals and objectives.	Connection with entire education sector in the town and hinterland. Connection with diverse community groups/ social isolation -elderly, youth, disability, traveller and migrant. Volunteer scheme or Ambassadors scheme for retired members of community.
Build on our community programmes towards establishing a Hub to support multi-disciplinary work.	Continued support for Wexford Playwrights studio, make/curate programmes, LIFT, One Voice Festival, Artists in Residence.	Engaging artists in longer terms from multi disciplinary backgrounds within the community in partnership with local organisations for support on programmes.
Review our focus for artistic engagement with our communities of place and interest.	Creatively realising: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• WildSong Ensemble vocalisation programme with Laura Hyland.• Participating in Open Mic spoken word events Stephen James Smith and Big Sing Christmas community choir with Elizabeth Studdard.• Creative Youth Lab with co curators Jeni Roddy and Peter Murphy allowing youths to explore and experiment in different art forms.• Target disability sector with Vibes DJ programme for adults with disabilities.• Swing into Afternoon Jazz and chat events for seniors in community with Arts office Community panel Artists: Melanie O'Reilly trio featuring Carole Nelson and documenting writer Michelle Dooley Mahon.	Expand potential for example via an online or live book or music club to engage with Active Retired in Wexford to strengthen connection with Wexford Arts Centre. Connecting with different nationalities in community including new Ukraine community and continued outreach to traveller community for programme engagement. YPCE programming to be further developed through: partnership with Music Generation on Youth Sessions, Mini Maestros parent and toddler music workshops. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting touring programmes geared to the very young.• Ongoing development of the partnership with Wexford County Council of the Living Arts visual arts schools programme.• Delivery of ongoing weekly Little Artists and Discovery clubs for Age 4-6 yrs and 7-12 yrs.• Design and delivery of new programme in 2022 for youth through the Creative Youth Lab: TY programme.• Additional support in kind for productions with County Wexford Youth Theatre.
Strengthen our connections with local organisations and businesses in our town & hinterland.	Place greater emphasis on connection with town businesses e.g. Open Nights/ networking events to raise awareness and strengthen connections. Dinner theatre options with D'Lush café, promotion of upgraded facilities for business events through Wexford Chamber.	Connecting our building more with the town/ townspeople/businesses- expanded facilities and outdoor patio space. That it's the 'go – to 'cultural hub' of Wexford for both businesses and other town residents.
Deepen our connection with the cultural heritage of Wexford Town and County.	Potential to research and develop projects in response to cultural heritage with an artist in residence or curator in residence.	Potential through Wexford County Heritage plan grants scheme across 2 areas - Heritage research and heritage community & outreach Explore potential of European Project applications (Erasmus, Europa Nostra) to expand and develop project ideas from research process - digital storytelling for heritage. Potential for artist residency engaging with resources & archival material.

8.2 AMBITION

To increase and diversify audiences for the Arts Centre’s programme of activities and generate a greater sense of ownership throughout the County.

Wexford Arts Centre is an organisation of regional significance and is keen to ensure that the positive impact of its programme and related activities is felt throughout the County. Inevitably Wexford Arts Centre’s core audience is primarily concentrated around Wexford town and the Presentation Centre in Enniscorthy has provided a focus there, but there is a large appetite for the arts throughout County Wexford and Wexford Arts Centre is keen to explore ways to reach out to new constituents.

Accessing additional funds and appointing experienced team members will be key to galvanising activities and fulfilling Wexford Arts Centre’s potential in this field. Creative partnerships will also help to ensure the efficient and effective use of resources.

8.2.1 COMMUNICATE

It is time to review how we are communicating our message to reflect the broad ranging nature of Wexford Arts Centre and it’s programme across visual arts, performances, creative learning, youth arts, outreach work, residencies and other artist supports, strategic partnerships and venue rental opportunities. A large cohort of our population is aging; another cohort is emerging, highly literate in new technologies, newer more diverse communities are also available as an audience and participant cohort. Differing media and messaging for different market segments and interest groups are, therefore, required.

GOAL:
Communicate our story with impact and give expression to the unique character and vibrancy of Wexford Arts Centre and the full scale and nature of its cultural programme.



OBJECTIVE	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS 2022/24	ACTIONS 2024/26
Strengthen how we articulate and communicate our vision, purpose and programme.	<p>Introduce additional targeted channels of communication in broadcast, press, social media, online artform journals, and blogs to build national, local and international visibility, awareness and reputation for our work.</p> <p>Review website, to better reflect and promote the wide-ranging nature of Wexford Arts Centre's programme, artists and community supports, (including overview of tech spec, programme archive, governance, policies).</p> <p>Review branding to reflect the values and ethos of the organisation and integrate clear branding across all online platforms and print.</p> <p>Review social media platforms, ensuring clarity of purpose in associated messaging for target audiences and programme segments.</p>	<p>Review and re-design format of monthly programme, to better communicate the multi-faceted programme of Wexford Arts Centre (including workshops, outreach, residencies and work in development, new partnerships etc).</p> <p>Consider an expanded quarterly or bi-monthly programme available in print and online.</p> <p>Research potential of business sponsorship, if required, to enable expansion of current format.</p> <p>Strengthen local brand perception through marketing/ communications links with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wexford Business/Enterprise Networks• Wexford Cultural Networks• Wexford Education Networks• Wexford Tourism Networks• Wexford Community & Rural Development Networks
Strengthen communication and articulation of arts education programme.	<p>-Establish clarity of purpose and strategic intent for Wexford Arts Centre's Arts Education / Creative Learning / Outreach programme.</p> <p>-Consider Youth Arts Hub to strengthen the brand for youth creative engagement / creative learning, reflecting current potential through partnership with national and regional initiatives Creative Schools, Youth Theatre of Ireland, Wexford Local Development, etc.</p>	<p>Identify priority areas and target groups for development of arts education programme, building on existing outreach work with Special Schools, Women's Network, Active Retirement groups, disability etc.</p>
Review our communications channels and evaluate their effectiveness in reaching our target audiences / market segments and attendance.	<p>Review effectiveness of current channels of communication, considering the value of traditional and new media channels for various market segments.</p> <p>Optimise the use of digital media to improve communications and marketing so we connect more dynamically with diverse publics and multiple stakeholders (within and beyond our geographical area).</p>	<p>Survey, measure and track our audiences to understand better their patterns of behaviour, booking patterns etc. audience surveys, phone bookings, online bookings).</p> <p>Introduce online booking for audiences, in which we can gather more demographic and booking patterns.</p> <p>Online listings on national platforms in arts, culture, tourism etc.</p>
Broaden and Diversify our Audience Base.	<p>Strengthen our existing audience programmes to encourage loyal, diverse and new audiences to reflect, enjoy and engage with contemporary arts and the work of artists.</p> <p>Maximise on the opportunities that digital technologies and online streaming gives to engaging new audiences beyond the region (nationally and internationally).</p> <p>Further develop opportunities for audiences to have deeper engagement with artists and artforms e.g. Meet the artist, post show discussions, workshops – to be open to our audience as creators, participants and receivers of arts experiences.</p>	<p>Compile Audience Development Plan.</p> <p>Determine new market segments and opportunities based on gaps identified, demographics, new trends & patterns (culturally curious tourist, youth audience, retired audience, learning audiences).</p> <p>Connect with Visit Wexford and Fáilte Ireland Marketing and promotional platforms and promotional campaigns.</p> <p>Consider daytime performances/ workshops / arts experiences targeted at a) retired cohort b) day tripper tourists in summer season.</p> <p>Maximise opportunities that other festivals and events in the town (give to engage new audiences in Wexford Arts Centre's.</p>

8.2.2 CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wexford Arts Centre will continue to deliver excellent customer services with emphasis on personalised service according to needs for access and programme interests to enhance positive visitor experiences. Enhance customer engagement through regular contact through monthly newsletter and in person updates at box office and respond to regular feedback on programme and operations.

8.2.3 PROMOTIONAL EVENTS

Wexford Arts Centre's 50th anniversary in 2024 is an ideal opportunity to celebrate the Arts Centre's success at a social, cultural and economic level. Marking the occasion provides the opportunity to:

- » Raise Wexford Arts Centre's profile locally and nationally.
- » Produce and promote a special event or series of activities.
- » Thank funders and other supporters.
- » Announce future plans.
- » Reward customer loyalty.
- » Encourage new and foster exiting connections with the public
- » Attract corporate sponsorship and other funding.

There is a lot to celebrate in terms of achievements and it will give the organisation a renewed sense of energy.

8.2.4 CULTURAL TOURISM

Cultural tourism is a key development agenda for a wide range of agencies including Wexford County Council Visit Wexford and Failte Ireland. Sightseers and Culture Seekers are a recognised consumer segment that will deliver sustained revenue and visitor growth for the tourism industry. Wexford Arts Centre will explore the potential for developing new audiences within the cultural tourism market and consider how best to engage at a practical level with colleagues in the tourism industry. Product, planning and promotion are key and there are clearly opportunities for a strategic partnership approach involving other local arts providers such as Wexford Festival Opera and the new Four Rivers collaboration.



8.3 PARTNERSHIPS

Goal :
Develop cultural and cross sectoral partnerships and collaborations at local, regional and national level to support greater diversity and strengthen capacity in our work.

OBJECTIVE	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS 2021
Establish strategic arts/cultural partnerships with key stakeholders in Wexford.	<p>Develop strategic partnership / MOU with Wexford Arts Office to establish Wexford Arts Centre as a key cultural partner to support and facilitate Wexford County Council's artist residency programme, creative youth partnership, Creative Ireland Creative Communities programme and other artists professional development programmes in Wexford.</p> <p>Wexford Local Development – Strategic partnership for Creative Youth Partnership, strengthen relationship with Music Generation (rental of space for rehearsals, workshops, performances) and explore potential of stronger connections with Creative Digital Media Course (placement, work experience, 1 year employment through CE prog or TUS programme).</p> <p>Establish closer working relationships with Fáilte Ireland / Wexford Tourism to explore Wexford Arts Centre's role in cultural and creative tourism opportunities for 'destination Wexford- Consider offering and attractions in creating 'experiences' for culturally curious market segment and family tourism within summer season initially.</p>
Formalise existing relationships established with venues/arts centres in the Southeast to consider joint programming, co-productions, co-commissions etc.	<p>Explore potential to co-commission and co-produce new playwriting with venues in South East e.g. Four Rivers.</p> <p>Explore other ways of collaborating with venues in the County and region to share resources and complement each other's offering, in addition to programming partnerships, perhaps co-commissions, co-productions most effectively.</p> <p>Informal supports such as sharing information and resources (such as health and safety advice/ processes; child protection, insurances).</p>
Establish partnership with Wexford's cultural organisations and Community & Business Alliance towards a shared cultural 'brand' for Wexford.	<p>Explore potential to collaborate with Business & Community Alliance to strengthen the town's 'cultural' brand and offering, with potential of sharing resources (projects officer?) towards applications to LEADER, Town Renewal, Rural Regeneration & Development Fund etc.</p> <p>Formalise strategic partnerships with Wexford's other cultural providers – clarity in communication re. nature of partnership / collaboration/working relationship – is there opportunity for more meaningful artistic collaboration / co-commissioning etc.</p> <p>Explore potential to work more closely with businesses re. marketing / promotional packages around events (pre-theatre meal, accommodation etc) or advertising in Wexford Arts Centre's programme, sponsorship of aspects of programme.</p>
Develop the range and reach of our work internationally.	<p>Establish and build connections with Wexford's international networks.</p> <p>Maximise the potential of online dissemination of work to connect with international networks. i.e. Georgia Southern University, Origin 1st Irish Theatre Festival, New York, Centre Culturel Irlandais.</p> <p>Research potential of European projects and funds to collaborate with UK and N. America.</p>





FINANCE

"Our ambition is to diversify and increase income streams in order to facilitate creative, physical and operational developments and improvements at Wexford Arts Centre."

9.1 BASELINE

Wexford Arts Centre's careful financial management has resulted in break-even status in recent years despite the many risks and uncertainties which prevailed in the industry and the uncertainty wrought by the Covid 19 global pandemic. Like most arts organisations, Wexford Arts Centre is dependent on grant support from a small number of key sources in a funding environment, which is becoming increasingly competitive.

Wexford Arts Centre's main goal is to access additional resources and leverage earned income streams in order to expand activities and increase impact, particularly in the areas of co-production, commissioning, education and outreach. Ideally Wexford Arts Centre would also like to achieve a 'comfort zone' in the accounts, which would allow it to mitigate against financial risks. The twin objectives of sustaining current levels of operation while pursuing organisational growth are at the heart of this strategic plan for the arts centre.

9.2 AMBITION

Diversify and increase income streams in order to facilitate creative, physical and operational developments and improvements at Wexford Arts Centre.

The changing nature of supports for arts infrastructure, coupled with the additional financial strains associated with Covid-19, necessitates arts centres like Wexford Arts Centre to look at diversifying its income streams and broadening its support base.

Up to now, the predominant supports for Wexford Arts Centre's has been through The Arts Council and Wexford County Council. The level of subvention from Wexford County Council is comparable to venues around the country. New initiatives delivered through Wexford County Council, particularly the Creative Ireland programme, represent new opportunities for partnership and support to deliver on Wexford Arts Centre's ambitions. Changing parameters and shifts in Arts Council policy relating to venues now potentially places Wexford Arts Centre within a new strand of multi annual support from the Arts Council.

Considering the extent of the programme, Wexford Arts Centre's represents good value for money when considered not only in the context of arts development, but also for the crucial role it plays as a key cultural hub for the South East. The operational model has been created with sustainability in mind. The Centre will continue to broaden its base beyond the arts, build organisational capacity in fundraising, enhance relationships with existing supporters / patrons, forge new partnerships that ultimately diversify our income streams and enable the sustainable growth of the organisation.

9.3 FINANCE

GOAL:
Renew our organisational capacity to ensure our future as a well-managed, well-governed and well-funded organisation.

10

MONITORING & EVALUATION



Wexford Arts Centre's performance is regularly monitored and evaluated by the Board, Director and Senior Management team using a number of quantitative and qualitative measures, including:

- » Annual Financial Plan signed off by Board.
- » Spreadsheets of each event maintained daily with audience and cost projections. Spreadsheets for each event in order to monitor and map trends in programme and audience.
- » Quarterly Management accounts reviewed by Financial Sub committee and presented to Board including commentary by Director on significant variations against projections and remedial action.
- » Actual audience figures and sales for each show against projections.
- » Other revenue generated against projections.
- » Quarterly meetings with Programme, Visual Arts, Financial and Fundraising sub committees. Chairs of committees reporting at board meetings, addressing management and financial issues and strategic planning.
- » Regular senior management meetings.
- » Periodic 'Away Days' or staff meetings to assist with evaluation and longer term planning.
- » Focus groups.
- » Press reviews.
- » Customer feedback.

CONCLUSION

Wexford Arts Centre enriches the lives of the people of the county and visitors alike by bringing together artists and communities to create, collaborate, share, learn and be inspired. The Arts Centre has had a tangible impact over five decades on the lives of individuals, the social fabric and creativity of the communities with which it engages. Having built on the work of those who came before. Wexford Arts Centre will pass on a rich inheritance to future generations. It will support its stated mission by growing and diversifying its audience and revenue sources, embracing technology, innovation and strengthen its relationships with partners and supporters. Wexford Arts Centre has evolved over time and through this recent period of global uncertainty. It will continue to adapt and to evolve creatively becoming more resilient and relevant for the future.

APPENDIX 1



CONSULTATION

STAFF (VIA STAFF MEETINGS)

BOARD (VIA BOARD MEETINGS)

PUBLIC (VIA SURVEY)

Wexford Arts Centre is now writing a new plan (2022 to 2026) centred on where Wexford Arts Centre goes next. At this point, we would like to invite you to have your say in shaping the future direction of the arts centre, tell us how we can add, change, improve or even, reinvent Wexford Arts Centre over the next three years as we enter this important phase in our development of the arts in the county.

We would be grateful if you could answer the following questions and submit your response by 28th February 2022. Please note that your response will be treated as confidential.

Two surveys were carried out in the development of this Strategic plan:

1. **Wexford Arts Centre - Public Survey**
2. **Wexford Arts Centre - Artists Survey**

Additional Reference:
Wexford Arts Centre Cultural Inclusion Survey and report by Monika Saplielak Centre for Creative Practices.





ARTISTS/GROUPS/EVENTS FEATURED:

Wexford Whale Mosaic by Helen McClean Helena Mulkerns - Cáca Milis Cabaret, Slí Ceol Cois Sláine at the Irish National Heritage Park, Orla Barry, Brian Maguire, Melanie O'Reilly, St. Brigids Day Care Centre, Mary Ruth Walsh, Moving Under Skies led by Deirdre Grant and Nick Day, Wexford Playwrights Studio featuring Tiernan Messitt-Greene, Gary Lydon and Naoise Dunbar, Jolie Vyann, Melanie O'Reilly, Taylor Dench, Els Deitvorst, Living Arts, Katherine Atkinson, Myles Breen, Stephen Brandes, David O'Doherty, Kevin Lawlor, Vibes with DJ Ronan Buggy, Wexford School of Art and Design (SETU), Marion McEvoy, Jerry Fish, Elysia Mc Mullen (Bill And Fred Productions), Luisa Schmitz and Wexford Drama Group, Sasha Terfous.

Photographer Credit: Michael Duggan and Lar O'Toole

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Wexford Arts Centre Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026

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