



County Offaly Arts Strategy

Inspire – Imagine – Involve
[2018-2022]

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Inspire - Imagine - Involve





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Foreword

Offaly's arts strategy: **Inspire-Imagine-Involve** [2018-2022] is ambitious in its intent for the arts to grow and flourish over the coming five years, yet realistic in how it is to achieve depth and sustainability for arts activity across the county. **Inspire-Imagine-Involve** has the stated ambition of becoming the 'heartbeat' of Offaly culture. If creativity provides the pulse for generating fresh perspectives, then our people and our sense of place are the inspirational resources, from which Offaly artists and arts practitioners can imagine and reimagine Offaly culture.

As a local authority the arts are an integral part of our public service. Offaly County Council recognises the value of creative and artistic activity, at all levels of engagement, as significantly contributing to the social health and wellbeing of our citizens. In addition, the role the arts play in attracting inward economic investment and tourism. Offaly County Council, through its arts service, maintains a strategic overview of arts development within the county. We encourage and foster a partnership approach, collaborating with a range of local and national agencies and other sectors (education, youth, health promotion, along with local business and corporate bodies) to advance our shared objectives.

With the publication of Offaly County Council's fourth consecutive arts strategy, **Inspire-Imagine-Involve** [2018-2022] we are better placed to invest and support arts development in the county. Coinciding with this county arts strategy, Offaly County Council welcomes a new partnership with the Arts Council/An Comhairle Ealaíon, which, through a multi-annual financial Framework Agreement [2018-2025], will enable the delivery of quality arts experiences for Offaly's communities, and ensure wider and greater impact.

The addition of a **five-year cultural investment, provided by Creative Ireland** to every local authority [2017-2022], brings further opportunity. Offaly County Council will invest wisely in cross-disciplinary programmes and projects (incorporating aspects of arts, heritage, library and architecture) to cherish and celebrate our shared culture.

On behalf of Offaly County Council we warmly commend this five year arts strategy to you, the citizens of Offaly, to inspire, to imagine and, most especially, to get involved in the arts over the coming five years.

Cllr. Liam Quinn
Cathaoirleach

Anna-Marie Delaney
Chief Executive

1. Introduction - *a policy driven agenda*

County Offaly, situated in the heart of Ireland, is endowed with a remarkable and particular heritage and culture. Across Offaly communities actively contribute their wealth of collective creative talent to the ongoing vitality of the county and the wider Midland region. Individual creativity is cherished. The arts give expression and response to contemporary culture offering fresh, sometimes challenging, perspectives on aspects of our lives, identity and on our shared humanity.

The diverse range of artistic practice and engagement happening throughout the county is recognised and valued as playing an integral part in nurturing and enriching County Offaly's unique sense of place and the people. The county arts strategy: *Inspire-Imagine-Involve* provides a statement of intent, ambition and determination; seeking to enable the arts to be the heartbeat of County Offaly culture.

Inspire-Imagine-Involve sets out an overall strategy for the development of the arts in County Offaly, for the period 2018-2022. It speaks to all Offaly citizens; recognising the significant contribution that engagement with the arts brings both to individual wellbeing and to the wider society. It aims to tackle disadvantage caused by gender, race, ability, experience, geography, or by any other factor that may inhibit or impair participation.

Inspire-Imagine-Involve is a policy-driven, consultation-informed strategy, designed to deliver strongly for the county; to its artists and to its local communities, through the distinctive contribution that the arts make to public life.

This planning process, undertaken every five years, is a reminder to listen and to hear what people are saying and to involve them in decision-making. As a public service arts provider, Offaly County Council continues to place the needs of the people of Offaly at the core of the strategy; to grow and deepen the reach of the arts, by providing high quality arts experiences for Offaly's citizens and visitors to the county.

Inspire - Imagine - Involve



Inspire-Imagine-Involve is underpinned by a strong vision and with a mission/purpose that is articulated within three overarching priority strands that focus attention on: upholding the processes of artistic practise and creative endeavour; approaches to enhancing public engagement and access to the arts; and, how Offaly, as a place inspires, resources and enriches arts development.

Inspire-Imagine-Involve complements and aligns itself with the mission and objectives of the Local Economic and Community Plan [2016-2021] and with other national plans and strategies (set out in Section 1.2.) to address the challenges, highlighted through the analyses of data, and from public consultations through a variety of actions.

To assure the successful delivery and implementation of **Inspire-Imagine-Involve** [2018-2022], Offaly County Council, through the arts office, continues to work closely with key local, regional and national partners, in creative, public, private, community and voluntary sectors, collaborating on shared agendas.

1.1 Profile of County Offaly: People & Place

1.1.1. Administrative region

In the context of the regional assembly areas, County Offaly is located within the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, along with 11 other areas/counties that include: Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, South Dublin, Fingal, Wicklow, Kildare, Meath, Louth, Laois, Westmeath and Longford. The counties of Offaly, Laois, Westmeath and Longford, combined, form one section of the Midland Strategic Planning Area. County Offaly is a member of the designated EU NUTS II region of Ireland comprising of 14 areas of the Border, Midlands, and Western Regions of Ireland.

1.1.2. Geography

The Offaly landscape is primarily flat, with the exception of the Slieve Bloom mountains and their foothills located to the south west of the county. Other significant features include the River Shannon (and Callows) running along the western boundary of the county; the River Brosna, a tributary of the Shannon; the Grand Canal which traverses the county; as well as important archaeological and historical sites such as Clonmacnoise, Durov and, an extinct volcano, Croghan Hill.

A comprehensive system of eskers is mainly concentrated in the northwest and centre of the county. Approximately one fifth of the county is comprised of peatland, with the majority of land being used for a mix of agriculture and forestry. In recent times, some peatland areas have been developed as key educational and cultural amenities.





These developments have replaced the traditional usage of peat extraction as the main source of combustible energy, which had assured employment opportunities for generations of Offaly people. The best known examples of these transformational and renewal programmes include Clara Bog, which is of international scientific and educational significance, being over 50% of remaining uncut raised bog in North West Europe. Also, Lough Boora Discovery Park is a prime example of a cutaway bog area that has been developed as a high value, bio-diverse environmental and cultural amenity that now incorporates Offaly's highly regarded Sculpture Park.

1.1.3. Population

Approximately 40% of Offaly's population of 77,961 (Census 2016) resides in the larger towns, such as Tullamore, Birr, Edenderry, Clara and Portarlington. However, the county remains predominantly rural in nature, with 30% residing in a well-developed network of smaller towns and villages of less than 1,500 population and the remainder located in the open countryside. Mindful of this, a stated key objective of the Offaly arts strategy is to foster and invest in ambitious and sustainable programmes that target those communities most hard to reach.



1.2 Local and National Policy Context

1.2.1. Statutory Requirements

The strategic underpinning of the county arts strategy *Inspire-Imagine-Involve* [2018-2022] is governed by the policy context of the arts at national and local level. Local authorities have a statutory obligation to develop the arts, as set out in the Arts Act, 2003. In conjunction with the Local Government Reform Act 2014 for economic and community development, the role played by the arts is recognised as crossing and being integral to many public policy agendas. Operationally, local authorities, through their respective arts offices, already forge key strategic alliances and partnerships with the Arts Council/An Comhairle Ealaíon, other national agencies and government departments, in particular Culture, Education, Health, Tourism, Social Protection, so as to ensure comprehensive access and engagement with arts activity within their county.

Arts Act 2003: The Arts Act requires that local authorities prepare and implement plans for the development of the arts within their functional area. The Act defines the arts as “any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and including in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture and includes any medium when used for those purposes.” Provision includes financial and other assistance for the purpose of “stimulating public interest in the arts, promoting knowledge appreciation and practice of the arts or improving standards in the arts.”

Local Government Reform Act 2014: The recent reform of local government has strengthened the role of local authorities in encouraging and promoting local economic and community development in response to local need. An important element of the Reform Act for local authorities includes the development of a six-year Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). The overarching vision of Offaly’s Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021 is connected to People, Business and Place as being the county’s ‘finest attributes’.¹ An integrated approach is required within which the arts have an important role and function in both the economic and community streams of Offaly’s LECP. Developing the County’s cultural infrastructure enhances employment opportunities and attracts inward investment and tourism. Providing better access and greater public engagement with the arts is a unifying force enhancing community cohesion and imbuing a sense of place.

¹ Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

1.2.2. Strategic Alliances and Partnerships

The Arts Council/An Comhairle Ealaíon:

The Arts Council/An Comhairle Ealaíon is Offaly's principal strategic partner for developing the arts in County Offaly. As the national agency for the arts in Ireland, the Arts Council works in partnership with every local authority to ensure development and promotion of the arts throughout Ireland.² The Arts Council's ten-year national plan, Making Great Art Work [2016-2025], outlines strategic priorities that guide and direct the rationale for the Arts Council investments in the arts.

Furthermore, the Arts Council is embarking on a new approach to funding entitled Making Great Art Work Funding Framework, to complement policy priorities set out in Making Great Art Work [2016-2025]. From 2018, the Arts Council enters into new multi-annual funding Framework Agreements, rolled out over the period 2018-2022, with every local authority arts office. Offaly County Council commences this new funding arrangement in 2018 to coincide with our agreed objectives of the county arts strategy, *Inspire-Imagine-Involve* [2018-2022]. This type of targeted investment will progress and sustain the development of a select range of strategic actions thereby ensuring greater impact in the longer term.



² Set out in a Framework for Collaboration (2016) between the County and City Management Association and the Arts Council/An Comhairle Ealaíon

Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach:

Additionally, the county arts strategy is being prepared within a dynamic arts and cultural environment. New departures in government policy are creating opportunities that will have a positive impact on the environment within which the arts operate at county level. Key developments include the publication of the Department of Culture's ten-year plan, Culture 2025/ Éire Ildánach (2016). Ireland's first cultural policy framework articulates the important role of culture, and presents a road map indicating what the cultural sector is to achieve over the ten years leading up to 2025.

Creative Ireland:

The Creative Ireland mission is to place culture at the centre of public policy, by adopting an inter-governmental approach. Creative Ireland brings an enhanced level of coordination, focus and leadership to existing policies and initiatives across national and local government. Founded on the basis of a five-pillared interconnected programme, Creative Ireland states that:

- *Arts & Culture are intrinsic to the Irish State*
- *The arts belong to everybody and there is a need to increase access to, and participation in, the arts, to boost our creative industries and preserve our heritage*
- *Societies which invest in the arts and heritage are more prosperous and successful*

Local authorities are aligned to Pillar 2 – Creative Communities “empowering local authorities to lead the engagement of citizens”- of the Creative Ireland programme. In addition, each local authority has appointed a Creative Ireland team drawn from the Council's Community and Cultural Services division (Arts, Architecture, Heritage, Libraries and Community) and led by a coordinator from within the Creative Ireland team. Under the Creative Ireland programme each local authority has prepared a five-year culture plan (2018-2022).³

³ <https://creativeireland.ie/en/library/offaly>

1.3 Resourcing the Arts in Offaly

Offaly Arts Office is charged with developing and delivering high quality, imaginative arts activity with and for the people of Offaly and its visitors. In doing so the county arts office advocates for and clearly communicates the significant role that the arts play in enriching the wellbeing of society, of our citizens, and in enhancing the public realm.

Inspire-Imagine-Involve [2018-2022] is Offaly County Council's fourth successive arts strategy. The county's inaugural five-year arts plan [2007-2011] was implemented during a period of severe economic instability resulting in reduced financial resources. Consequently, the arts office, like others elsewhere, needed to reassess its modus operandi. In the revitalisation process of managing change under continuing adverse circumstances, Offaly's arts sector has proven to be, again and again, most effective at coming up with imaginative solutions. Through successive planning processes, building from former strategies, the arts office maintains its resilience by cultivating strategic alliances and partnership programmes. Creating bespoke arts programmes for specific contexts takes account of what Offaly culture, in its widest sense, can offer to help drive and sustain development.

The arts office collaborates with a number of Offaly County Council sections to foster and develop a creative and dynamic environment in which Offaly citizens can engage with the arts. Increasingly, the arts office cooperates with local authority sections, such as Heritage, Community, Architecture, Housing and Planning; working transversally to harness resources and build capacity for the arts. In addition, representatives of each of these sections, comprise the Public Arts Working Group which informs and advises on new public art work commissions for the county.

Over the next five years (2018-2022) a programme of arts in specific contexts features as a strong developmental approach towards embedding the arts at the core of Offaly culture. (c.f. Section 3.)

The arts office is comprised of a staff of four: Arts Officer, Arts Administrator, Music Generation Offaly/Westmeath (MGOW) Programme Coordinator, and MGOW administrative support. The arts office reports to the Council's Housing, Social and Cultural Strategic Policy Committee (SPC).

Inspire - Imagine - Involve

2. Approach – *engaging and listening*



2.1 Methodology

Inspire-Imagine-Involve [2018-2022] was prepared following consultation with artists, arts groups and organisations, and interested members of the public, elected representatives, the culture team of Offaly County Council and staff.

From the outset preparations were guided by some core questions:

- Q1:** *How best to maximise the impact of the arts in Offaly, in particular, to further civic engagement by targeting particular sectors of society?*
- Q2:** *How best to build capacity and optimise opportunity to enhance and develop an arts infrastructure in rural and in urban locations within County Offaly?*
- Q3:** *How best to stimulate and support fresh and original concepts and perspectives in the creation, practice and presentation phases of art development, in all genres?*



2.2. Consultation Process

The consultation process commenced in May and concluded in September 2017. The process involved four key stages and afforded interested parties the opportunity to have their say. An arts questionnaire was posted online, followed by three public consultation meetings held in the Municipal Districts of Tullamore, Edenderry and Birr respectively. A further three arts sector focus group meetings were held in Tullamore on the themes of: Arts in the Public Realm; Arts in Context + Children and Young People; and, on Artists, Creative Practitioners and Supporting Infrastructure. In addition, a range of targeted 1/1 information gathering and planning meetings were held to facilitate specialist inputs. The public consultation and focus group meetings were advertised in the local press and on the Council's website.

The consultation process helped to identify artists, groups and organisations active in the county, and to capture the opportunities, issues, needs and barriers to arts development identified by them.

A meeting with the Arts Council was also conducted to ensure that proposals emerging for Offaly align with national arts policy and strategy.

Desk research involved reviewing a broad range of relevant arts policy and research reports by the Department of Culture and the Arts Council, and publications by Offaly County Council which set out the Council's high level socio-economic objectives for development. The data analysis and topics raised through the consultation process cover a broad range of issues. These are summarised in section 2.3. The chapter concludes with a SWOT analysis which identifies the core strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the arts in County Offaly, identified by those who took part in the consultation process.

Arising from all the deliberations three priority strands emerged which underpin this arts strategy:

- 1. The People** – *enhancing public engagement with the arts;*
- 2. The Place** – *promoting the arts in the civic space;*
- 3. The Process** – *nurturing artistic talent and creative endeavour.*

2.3 Methodology

The consultation process confirms that there is a creative, diverse and vibrant artistic community made up of professional artists, amateur practitioners and voluntary groups engaged in the practice and development of the arts in County Offaly. However, arising from the consultation process a range of shared development and investment priorities emerged.

A core issue focused on the need to develop and strengthen arts infrastructure, both hard - building based i.e. multifunctional arts spaces for presentation, performance and exhibition, artist studios and creative participation hubs for community engagement, and soft - artists platforms to develop and engage audiences for new work; networks to support practitioners and inform socially engaged practice on the ground and forums, that make visible and celebrate diverse voices, especially the young. The need to improve financial and other supports for arts festivals, organisations and groups, many of whom operate on a voluntary basis, were highlighted as being vital to their sustainability.

✓ Changes in artistic practice driven by new technologies emerged as a recurring theme in the discussions, with specific reference to impacts in the fields of artistic curation, presentation and how audiences consume the arts in the 21st century. Participants identified this as an area that requires more focused attention by the county arts office. In general, the need for more visible points of access to arts activities and programmes especially in youth arts, arts-in-education, and arts-in-health, were highlighted.





Other high priority issues to emerge focused on the need to consolidate and expand opportunities for audience development, engagement and participation in arts programmes throughout the county; to deliver more balanced arts provision, focused especially on rural and harder to reach communities.

Artists highlighted the need for increased work opportunities and financial supports. Many spoke of the active role they play in the cultural development of their communities. However, the wider economic context and gaps in the local arts infrastructure continue to challenge them in building their careers and creative practice. Many referred to their struggle to make a living in the county. Special mention was also made of the need to support young arts graduates, with access to mentoring, coaching and work based opportunities. Improving access to studio spaces that support individual art form practice, as well as co-working spaces to facilitate interdisciplinary work and collaborations between those working in the arts and other sectors, were identified as core supports to improve creative working conditions. The opportunity to include the voice of artists in planning and reimagining the public realm was also mentioned.

The need for FilmOffaly to build new national and regional partnerships, business supports and facilities to capture potential opportunities for growth in the film industry sector was raised by many, as was the need to improve access to appropriate civic and cultural spaces for artistic presentation, performance and exhibition with specific reference to Tullamore and Edenderry. The need for greater access to the County art collection was also identified.

2.4. SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Substantial number of practising artists, especially in visual art, film and the performing arts

FilmOffaly and the strong pool of creative talent based locally

High quality arts and community festivals e.g. OFFline Film Festival, *Hullaballoo!* Offaly's Children's Arts Festival, Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival.

Anam Beo for their delivery of excellent in context arts in healthcare settings

Birr Theatre and Arts Centre for presenting and promoting the arts and, as an incubator hub for arts festival management

Music Generation Offaly/Westmeath (MGOW) for the provision of accessible, creative, diverse and inclusive, high-quality performance music education programmes both in and out of school settings

High quality public art commissions that capture the cultural essence of the county and very good working relationships between the Arts Office and other Council Departments, e. g. Heritage, Community, Architecture and Libraries

Drama, in particular the vibrancy of the amateur drama movement and the quality of many local productions and the opportunities the amateur movement provides for local people to participate in arts activity.

Opportunities

Develop the Sculpture Park at Lough Boora Discovery Park as a high quality national arts facility

Working with the Local Enterprise Office to stimulate crossover, co-creation and co-production between the arts and other sectors, particularly tourism

Build the FilmOffaly project, invest and grow the talent pool and skills base - positioning Offaly to evolve as a regional hub that supports national film and audio-visual clusters on the east and west of Ireland

Improving public access to the County art collection through an exhibition programme in the Atrium, Áras an Chontae, Tullamore.

Weaknesses

Lack of supports, financial awards and work opportunities for individual artists to sustain a living

Insufficient funding and resources allocated to key arts venues, organisations and groups vis à vis comparative allocations in neighbouring counties

Insufficient built arts infrastructure in terms of locally based creative spaces for community participation; and, work spaces for artists

A fragmented arts landscape between the east and west of the county, particularly evident in the main centres of Tullamore, Edenderry and Birr

Very limited opportunities for rural communities to engage and participate in the arts on any sustained basis

Heavy reliance on voluntary support in the development of arts festivals and special projects

Lack of appropriate facilities for the presenting, performing and exhibiting of local and national arts activity.

Threats

Declining levels of funds are always a threat to the development of the arts across all art forms

Pressure for artists to move due to inadequate facilities and/or work opportunities.

Lack of clarity around the artistic ethos of the Lough Boora Sculpture Park.

3. Inspire-Imagine-Involve: *County Offaly Arts Strategy* *[2018-2022]*





3.1. Vision Statement

'That the arts are embedded and integrated into the way of life of the people of County Offaly; accessible to and experienced by all citizens, as well as attracting visitors to the county.'

3.2. Core Values

In helping realise the Vision, from the outset, the core values that steer its implementation are:

diversity, co-operation, transparency

Diversity: Offaly County Council arts office actively encourages and supports diversity in many forms as enriching features of Offaly culture.

- *Diversity of practice - in supporting a wide range of artistic genres and the variety of ways of creating work;*
- *Diversity of opportunity - ensuring that people from all backgrounds, ability and age, can participate and have access to the arts;*
- *Diversity of place – enabling arts events to happen in rural and urban locations.*

Co-operation: Planning for arts development in the county is based on a model of co-operation and partnership. Arts practice and arts activity do not take place in isolation, inherently they respond to different aspects of people's lives. Cross-sectoral and interagency co-operation facilitate the reach of access to the arts, enriching the quality of the experience for people in different settings.

Transparency: Ensuring that the Arts Office conducts its business in an open and transparent manner. That Offaly artists and citizens are informed of opportunities, activities and events in a timely fashion.

3.3. Priority Strands

From the consultation process three overarching priority areas emerged that are at the heart of this strategy.

1. The People – enhancing public engagement in the arts

Engagement in the arts and creativity offer huge benefits for individuals and society. As a public-sector provider, Offaly County Council will continue to place the needs of Offaly people at the heart of the strategy, in a manner that's inclusive and speaks to all of its citizens - tackling disadvantage and any other factor which may inhibit participation in the artistic and cultural life of the county. In preparing this strategic plan Offaly County Council has developed a framework to celebrate, expand and further support the contribution of the arts to people's personal development, their wellbeing, their health, their local community and the economy.

2. The Place – promoting the arts in the civic space

A core purpose of this strategy is to enhance quality of life and quality of place through the distinctive contribution of the arts and creativity. The arts office will continue to contribute to enriching community life, working collaboratively with artists, many of whom take an active role in the cultural development of their communities and other Council departments, such as Heritage and Architecture, to build a strong sense of place. This will be achieved through artistic commissions under the Per Cent for Art Scheme, the Creative Ireland Offaly community award scheme and other emerging opportunities that support local communities to take the lead in creative placemaking. Artists will be invited to work with the Council on projects for the public realm that help to re-animate and re-define County Offaly's unique physical, social and cultural spaces.

3. The Process – nurturing artistic talent and supporting creative endeavour

A real strength of Offaly's arts landscape is the range of artists and creative practitioners who live and work in the county. These include visual artists, musicians, film directors, producers and script writers, new media specialists, theatre makers and the literary artists. However, as in most parts of Ireland, the broader **economic context and gaps in infrastructure continue to challenge** artists and those working the creative industries in their efforts to build a sustainable career path. Through the implementation of this strategy the arts office will support artists to connect with new audiences through residencies, bursary awards and exchange programmes. It will also support and encourage artists at different stages in their careers in the development of their creative practice through professional development opportunities and business mentoring to assist them to become more sustainable.

People, Place and **Process** represent the vital areas for development that will be embraced, improved and celebrated in equal measure through the implementation of this strategic plan.



3.4. Goals, Objectives & Planned Actions: 2018-2022

To give focus and drive to arts development in the county over the period 2018-2022, and arising from the consultation process, three goals have been developed. The arts objectives set out under each goal provide the means by which progress will be achieved. Planned actions will provide the baseline for measuring success, through evaluation, monitoring and review.



GOAL 1: Expand opportunities for people to engage and participate in the arts, countywide, through new partnership based initiatives and the consolidation/development of existing county arts office programmes.

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Planned Actions</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Anticipated Outcomes</i>
1.1. Foster and invest in ambitious and sustainable programmes that target specific sectors of society, in particular, those most hard to reach.	1.1.1. Support Offaly's Arts, Health and Wellbeing organisation, <i>Anam Beo</i> , reach its full potential for the delivery of high quality arts engagement programmes in healthcare and other community settings.	2018 - 22	Securing multi-strand partnership agreements to increase resources.
	1.1.2. Through the partnership <i>Music Generation Offaly/Westmeath</i> (MGOW), in collaboration with Westmeath County Council Arts Office and Laois/Offaly Education and Training Board (ETB), continue to enable high quality, early intervention, music experiences, for children and young people.	2018 - 22	Increase in level of participation in the music training programmes; Achievable progression routes from primary to third – level training.
1.2. Fund and develop co-operation partnerships that enable longer-term investment in arts in specific contexts programmes.	1.2.1. Research models for involving young people in the development of a young people's arts programme across the art forms that befits and supports shifts in contemporary youth culture.	2018	A new, financially viable model for young people's arts provision in Offaly; A Young People's Arts Forum to oversee development of the five-year programme.
	1.2.2. Offaly County Council co-invests with the Arts Council/An Comhairle Ealaíon to create and sustain young people's arts provision for Offaly.	2018	Securing a multi-strand and multi-annual funding partnership Framework Agreement.
	1.2.3. Ensure the continued creative development and sustainability of <i>Hullabaloo!</i> Offaly's Children's Arts Festival	2020 - 22	Securing an appropriate sustainable model.
1.3. Promote and encourage an age-friendly and inclusive approach to participation in the arts.	1.3.1. Explore arts projects in response to particular community needs working collaboratively with social inclusion and community agencies, such as Age Friendly Offaly, SICAP – Social Inclusion and Community Action Programme.	2018 - 22	Cultivating strategic partnerships.
1.4. Encourage and support communities to engage creatively with their locale and culture.	1.4.1. Re-incentivise the terms and conditions of OCC Arts Act Grant and Festival Arts Grant schemes.	2018 - 22	Imaginative and high-quality projects being created.
	1.4.2. Conduct a series of information clinics across the county to assist communities in making funding applications.	2018 - 22	Evidence gathered from the quality and content of applications.
1.5. Extend the reach of the arts by facilitating new approaches to developing audiences.	1.5.1. Work with key arts and culture service providers and venues in Birr, Edenderry & Tullamore to develop long-term audience development plans for their respective municipal districts.	2018 - 22	Discernible appreciation, understanding and knowledge of the impact of the arts with improved access and engagement.

GOAL 2: Enhance sense of place and build on the distinctive cultural identity of County Offaly by engaging artists to collaborate in the design and development of the counties physical, social and cultural spaces.

Objectives

Planned Actions

Timeline

Anticipated Outcomes

2.1. Support the development of concepts and models for spaces, existing and potential, that align with innovative art production and presentation, with local enterprise and civic engagement.

2.1.1. Lend advice and support, as required, to artistic and community groups reimagining the potential of disused building stock, as viable culture and civic urban spaces. (in particular, Edenderry culture and community working group, and Birr 2020 Artist Hub).

2018 - 22

Note concrete steps taken by these independent groups in investigating viable models.

2.1.2. Lend support to the Management Committee, Tullamore Community Arts Centre, as necessary, to ensure a viable, sustainable, fit-for-purpose multi-disciplinary arts and community centre is developed for Tullamore and the county.

2018 - 22

A well utilised community, artistic and cultural resource drawing on a sustainable model for development.

2.1.3. Continue to provide resources to Birr Theatre and Arts Centre to sustain the quality of its programme while developing its business potential as a festivals hub (*Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival, Scripts Irelands Playwriting Festival, OFFline Film Festival, Hullabaloo! Offaly's Children's Arts Festival, Birr Festival of Music and Voice*).

2018 - 22

Broadening of the local and national audience and increased community, artistic and cultural engagement.

2.2. Seek to foster imaginative creative and artistic responses to the uniqueness of Offaly culture, its landscape and people, as primary sources of inspiration.

2.2.1. Contribute to the reinvigoration of the Lough Boora Sculpture Park's artistic strategy – continuing a partnership agreement with Bord na Móna.

2018 - 22

Multi-annual funding through the Arts Council/OCC Framework Agreement. The reintroduction of a commissioning /programme budget as well as maximising resources from a range of agencies.

2.2.2. In consultation with the Steering Committee of FilmOffaly support a comprehensive evaluation and next steps development of this flagship county programme.

2018 - 22

A refreshed business model with increased funding from various sources.

2.3. Seek to integrate arts development programmes with other sections and divisions of Offaly local authority.

2.3.1. Working with relevant departments of Offaly County Council and other agencies, ensure that the arts programmes can be initiated as part of wider capital development programmes through the per cent for art scheme.

2019 - 22

The reconvening of an OCC Public Art Working Group with 5-year revised policy on public art commissioning.

2.4. Promote and market the arts in Offaly widely and comprehensively.

2.4.1. OCC Arts Office to develop a comprehensive communication strategy across all media.

2019 - 22

Communication implementation plan.

2.4.2. Continue co-publishing Midland Arts Magazine, with midland arts offices

2018 - 22

Increase in the profile and public awareness of the arts in the Midlands

2.5. Ensure there is a balance of arts provision across the county – between urban and rural – town and country.

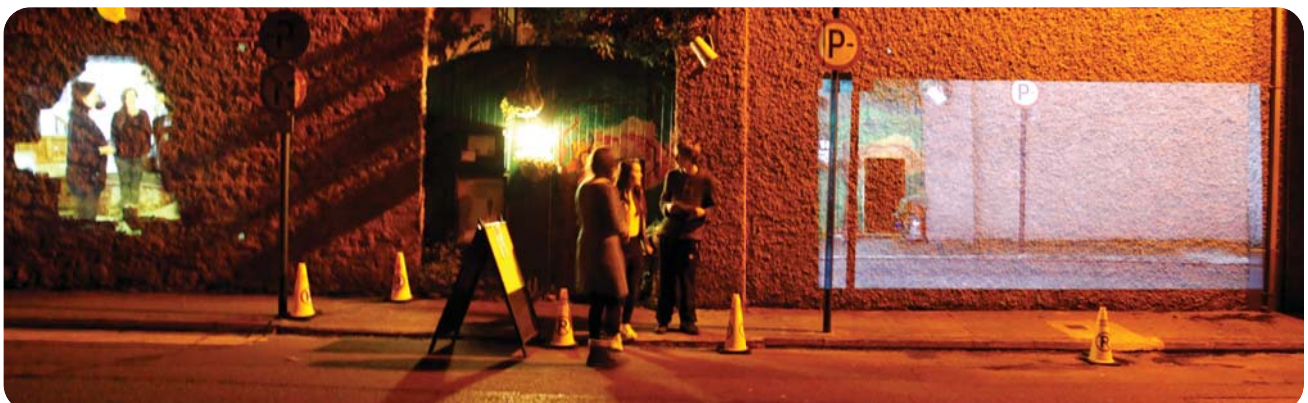
2.5.1. Hold regular information clinics, on different aspects of the county arts programme, in each of the three Municipal District of Birr, Edenderry and Tullamore

2018 - 22

Monitor and review through invited feedback.

GOAL 3: Continue to nurture and support artistic endeavor, so that great art can be enjoyed by all.

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Planned Actions</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Anticipated Outcomes</i>
3.1. Provide a range of mechanisms supporting Offaly-based artists & creative practitioners pursue their individual practice.	3.1.1. Offaly County Council supporting arts practitioners, to develop high quality socially engaged and community-based projects through OCC annual Arts Act Grants.	2018 - 22	Uptake of artists on workshops that support grant applications and development of projects for this award. Monitor and review the quality of the product and the feedback.
	3.1.2. Set-up an artists' panel for County Offaly, as a joint venture with County Laois, to promote and facilitate artists to create work in a range of settings in both counties.	2019	Over time, OCC securing an agreement with County Laois
3.2. Invest in the development of new artwork, and innovative, cross-disciplinary programmes.	3.2.1. In partnership with other agencies and programmes, incentivise new work commissions for particular audiences and new publics, such as, Per Cent for Art, Rural & Community Development scheme, Creative Ireland.	2019 - 22	Completion of projects and community feedback; ongoing monitoring by OCC Public Art Working Group and as part of the OCC Arts Office annual report.
3.3. Build capacity in the sector and at national and international level.	3.3.1. Initiate and co-finance long term artist-in-residence schemes, in a number of arts genres, partnering with interested agencies such as the library service and health and wellbeing providers	2018 - 22	Monitor and evaluate outcomes.
3.4. Foster employment/work opportunities for Offaly-based artists through the County art programme.	3.4.1. Conduct a survey on the scale, type and needs of current artist activity in Offaly.	2018	The data captured will assist with ongoing professional development for Offaly-based artists and, visiting artists.
3.5. Provide and advocate for the appropriate remuneration of artists, to align with Arts Council objectives.	3.5.1. Offaly County Council to survey and compile data on best practice remuneration for artists, seeking the support of the Association of Local Authorities Arts Officers (ALAAO) in Ireland.	2018	Association of Local Authorities Arts Officers (ALAAO) Statement of Intent.



4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Inspire-Imagine-Involve [2018-2022] serves as a road map. It charts how the overarching vision for the arts in Offaly, with its stated priority strands, is identified and pursued over the life of the strategic plan through a series of specified key objectives and accompanying actions. By design, the process of its implementation and delivery for the county will be best served through partnership and collaboration. This process requires a flexibility of approach informed by shifting cultural, economic and social circumstances. As a living document communication will be key to its successful implementation.

Adopting an integrated, co-operative approach, interdepartmentally within Offaly County Council, and across sectors complementary to the plan's mission, will enable and ensure realistic and achievable outcomes. Creating a comprehensive communication strategy is a central component of the implementation and monitoring process.

The arts office will oversee, in consultation with a range of stakeholders, the delivery of its five-year arts strategy, implemented through annual operational plans that are fully budgeted and resourced; the outputs of which are monitored and evaluated and published in the arts office's Annual Report to Offaly County Council. Moreover, these operational plans become effective feedback systems that help inform those strategic interventions that require more long-term planning and a greater level of investment.



Inspire - Imagine - Involve



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