



IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL  
An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn

The Arts Council and the Irish Research Council

*Framework for Strategic Partnership 2017 – 2020*



The purpose of this agreement is to provide a framework for the development of collaboration between the Arts Council and the Irish Research Council. This framework will guide partnership between the two agencies and provide for structured and consistent engagement over the period 2017 – 2020.

The agreement identifies specific goals and related actions around a number of focus areas of mutual strategic interest. The ultimate objective is to develop a stronger relationship between the two agencies and their respective sectors leading to positive outcomes and impacts for the arts in research and research in the arts in Ireland.

## Missions

The mission of the Arts Council is to lead the development of the arts in Ireland. It does this by:

- advocating the importance and value of the arts and promoting their practice and development;
- advising government and others on the arts as required by the Arts Act;
- investing public monies allocated to it by government in supporting artists and arts organisations to make work of excellence and in other actions consistent with its remit;
- working in partnership with the Department of the Arts and with other government departments as well as with local government and with agencies and organisations within and beyond the cultural sector.

The mission of the Irish Research Council is to enable and sustain a vibrant research community in Ireland by supporting excellent researchers in all disciplines from arts to zoology. It does this by:

- funding excellent research within, and between, all disciplines, and in doing so enhancing Ireland's international reputation as a centre for research and learning;
- supporting the education and skills development of excellent individual early-stage researchers and cultivating agile independent researchers and thinkers;
- collaborating and enabling knowledge exchange with government departments and agencies, enterprise and civic society to enrich the pool of knowledge to address Ireland's societal, cultural and economic challenges; and
- providing policy advice on postgraduate education and on more general research matters to the Higher Education Authority and other national and international bodies.

## Context

The arts, in all its forms, are a critical part of the fabric of Irish society. The arts help us to critically reflect on our past and present and consider our future as individual citizens and as a nation. Engagement with the arts can simultaneously move, energise and challenge us. Participating in the arts can offer significant experiences of personal fulfilment and development, especially for children and young people. These are strongly held assertions, but research can and does help us better understand how and why people engage with the arts and the outcomes and impacts that arise. This in turn can help us make better public policy around the arts and invest public funds more strategically.

Excellence in research in the arts will contribute greatly to driving innovative and forward-thinking policy development. Building excellence – in researchers and their ideas – is at the centre of the Irish Research Council's mission. From the Irish Research Council's perspective, cultivating research in the arts with strong impact is not something that can be achieved by working within academia alone. Accordingly, the Irish Research Council seeks to engage and collaborate widely with sectors beyond the research community, including government departments and agencies, civic society and enterprise.

The arts intersect with other economic, social and cultural fields and impact upon a range of sectors – tourism, creative industries, education, healthcare etc. There are established links between the arts and quality of life. An increasing body of literature points to the positive impact of art-based interventions in various domains including hospitals, therapeutic and care situations<sup>1</sup>, prisons and schools<sup>2</sup>. Studies have also pointed to economic impacts of the arts<sup>3</sup> and their spill over effects into other sectors of industry<sup>4</sup>. That the Irish Research Council has a remit which encompasses the arts but also cuts across the full spectrum of other related fields is an important aspect to this partnership.

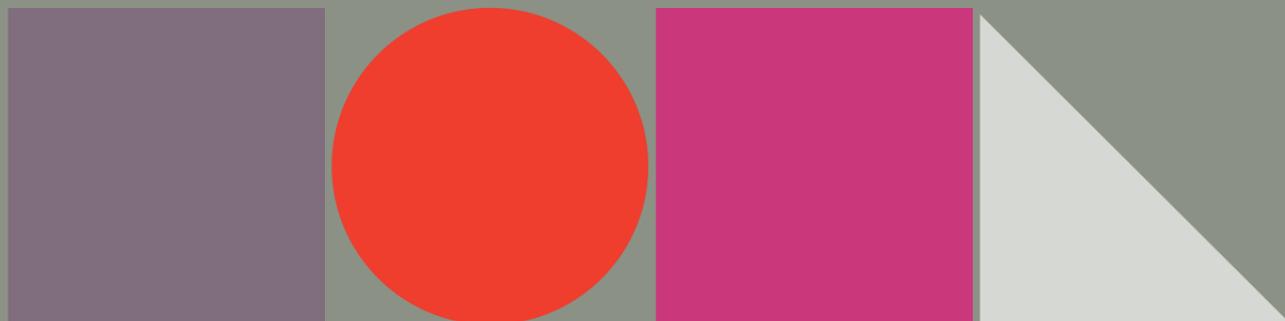
As for all state agencies, knowledge and evidence is critical to effective strategic development, policy-making and investment. It is in this context that the Arts Council and the Irish Research Council have formed a framework for partnership to guide fruitful collaboration over the coming years.

1 The Arts and Aging, National Endowment for the Arts, 2012  
<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Arts-and-Aging-Building-the-Science.pdf>.

2 Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People, Emer Smyth, 2016  
<http://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/Arts-and-cultural-participation-GUI.pdf>.

3 Assessment of the Economic Impact of the Arts in Ireland, Indecon, 2011  
[http://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/Indecon\\_Update\\_Report\\_fin.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/Indecon_Update_Report_fin.pdf).

4 Cultural and creative spillovers in Europe, Tom Fleming, 2015  
<https://ccspillovers.wikispaces.com/Evidence+review+2015>.



## The Arts Council Strategy 2016 – 2025

*Making Great Art Work*, 'establishes the coordinates by which the Arts Council will lead the development of the arts in the decade 2016–2025'. It commits the Arts Council to new partnerships that will harness the connections between the arts and wider society, education and the economy. An example of such a collaboration already in place is the Arts Council's [partnership with local government](#), launched in February 2016.

The Arts Council has also published a three-year plan setting out the investment strategies, projects and programmes it will prioritise during 2017–2019, which include research-related actions.

The Implementation Plan 2017 – 2019 specifically sets research ambitions, examining the Living and Working Conditions of Artists and longitudinal research measuring levels of participation in the arts. Working with research partners will be critical to progressing these significant pieces of work.

## Irish Research Council Strategy

The Irish Research Council's Strategy Statement sets out its strategic objectives according to its mandate. The Irish Research Council will be publishing a new strategy statement in 2017. The Irish Research Council's functions and mandate are very much reflected in its diverse range of research programmes. Half of the Irish Research Council's 280 awards made annually to early-stage career researchers under its Government of Ireland programmes are in the arts, humanities and social science disciplines. In addition, the Irish Research Council has established programmes designed to foster the flow of knowledge between the research community and both the public sector and civic society, so as to inform better decision-making and enhance the impact and benefits of research. The Irish Research Council's *Research for Policy and Society* programme enables peer-reviewed research to be carried out by expert academics into topics identified by government departments and agencies, and funded or co-funded by them. The *New Foundations* programme (*Engaging Civic Society strand*) brings researchers and civic society organisations together to collaborate on a research project of mutual interest.

*Innovation2020*, Ireland's five year strategy on research and development, science and technology, recognises the importance of research to address societal challenges and the need to enhance the engagement of public entities and civic society in this agenda. The Irish Research Council intends to lead on the delivery of this agenda going forward, including widening and deepening partnerships with public sector bodies.

## Statement of common purpose

The Arts Council and the Irish Research Council share a vision of Ireland as an open, creative, tolerant and enterprising country in which everyone is enabled to reach their potential and which is recognised internationally as such.

Jointly, we believe that research helps us to better understand people and places, supporting us to reach new communities, as well as helping us to plan more strategically for the future.

Both Councils, through this collaboration framework, aim to develop and sustain a focused set of activities into the future, and work together to fully enable the societal and policy impact of research into the arts.

The strategic partnership is designed to harness the collective expertise of both Councils and strengthen the evidence-base informing strategic planning, decision-making and advice in relation to the arts. Engaging with research will support the Arts Council in being the expert body in the arts and provide it with qualitative and quantitative evidence to make the case for the arts and the unique place that they occupy in Irish life. For the Irish Research Council, this partnership will strengthen the ecosystem for research in the arts, and will contribute to its objective of enriching the pool of knowledge and expertise available for addressing Ireland's current and future challenges

Both Councils share a number of important common values, most notably a commitment to excellence, openness and collegiality /partnership. These values will underpin this framework for collaboration.

## Goals under this partnership

The Arts Council and the Irish Research Council will work together to achieve, by 2020, the following goals:

1. The development of a long-term, effective working relationship between the Arts Council and the Irish Research Council.
2. The successful implementation of the Arts Council's research actions over the period 2017 – 2020.
3. The development of emerging questions and challenges relevant to the arts and arts policy and the engagement of the research community in addressing these.
4. The identification and promotion of outputs and evidence from arts-based research<sup>5</sup> and research into the arts, including the joint convening of at least one symposium for the arts/research community on this topic. There will be a specific focus on the arts in the Irish Research Council's #LoveIrishResearch communications campaign.
5. The engagement of the arts within interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral contexts (e.g. health, education), thus enhancing opportunities for arts researchers and artists through collaboration, nationally or internationally. Good practice in areas such as Engaged Research<sup>6</sup> will be promoted.
6. The development of the STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics) agenda in Ireland, drawing on the Irish Research Council's policy statement<sup>7</sup>. In particular, opportunities to engage and collaborate with the enterprise community will be pursued.
7. Effective integration of the key principles of this agreement into relevant future planning and development strategies of the Arts Council and the Irish Research Council.

## Values

In working together to deliver on the goals of this framework, we will be guided by the following values:

- a conviction that in partnership we can be more effective;
- a commitment to excellence in research;
- a commitment to engaging new voices and perspectives externally that can help in the implementation of the framework;
- a public service ethos that has the citizen at its core;
- a commitment to transparency and accountability;
- a commitment to regular, open and inclusive communication;
- a mutual respect for the distinct but overlapping remits and missions of both parties to the framework; and
- recognition that this framework provides opportunities to enhance the professional development and experience of our staff.

## Management, monitoring and review

The Directors of the Arts Council and the Irish Research Council respectively will oversee the implementation of the partnership framework as set out. The bodies' respective Councils (i.e. Boards) will be briefed at least annually on progress in the form of a progress report.

A joint statement will be published annually by the two Councils providing an update on progress, key learnings, and any challenges/issues arising.

The implementation teams in both agencies will meet at least twice yearly to formally review progress and prioritise actions for the coming six months.

### The Arts Council:

Orlaith McBride, *Director*



### The Irish Research Council:

Peter Brown, *Interim Director*

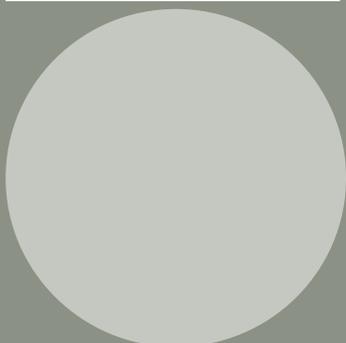


<sup>5</sup> Research methodologies that fall under the umbrella of 'arts-based' are, to varying degrees, artistic in nature and guided by art forms that are traditionally not associated with academic inquiry (Campus Engage Engaged Research Report 2017)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.campusengage.ie/sites/default/files/FINAL%20JAN%2016\\_ER%20Report%202016%20Jan%20v2.pdf](http://www.campusengage.ie/sites/default/files/FINAL%20JAN%2016_ER%20Report%202016%20Jan%20v2.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> forthcoming

Cover images courtesy of: Visual Centre for Contemporary Art and The Bernard Shaw; Dance Ireland; Irish Chamber Orchestra; Mike Hannon; Fearghus Ó Conchúir; Wandering Methods; Arts Council and Irish Research Council.



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