



# **Uillinn Public Engagement Strategy**

(2017- 2020)

## **‘The Arts are inextricably part of social and cultural change’**

Making Great Art Work, Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland, Arts Council Strategy (2016-2025)



**Uillinn** West Cork Arts Centre is an arts facility that creates opportunities for the people of West Cork to have access to, and engagement with, local and global arts practice of excellence.

*'Its programme is an exemplary model of exposition, mediation and engagement'*

The Arts Council, funding assessment 2015



**Uillinn** West Cork Arts Centre's Education and Community Programme provides an important resource and support for artists living and working locally and nationally. It presents creative engagement opportunities for communities that increase arts participation and make critical cultural experiences accessible for a rural community.

## **Background**

Uillinn: West Cork Arts Centre is an arts facility that creates opportunities for the people of West Cork to have access to, and engagement with local and global arts practice of excellence.

With the support of the Arts Council, Cork County Council and other significant partnerships, WCAC provides important resources and supports for artists living and working locally and nationally. It is committed to enhancing the skills and capacity of the local arts sector. It presents creative engagement opportunities for communities that increase arts participation and make critical cultural experiences accessible for a rural population.

Established in 1985 in North Street, Skibbereen, West Cork Arts Centre moved to a new purpose built building in 2015 in the heart of the town, at the 'elbow', or in Irish 'uillinn', of the Ilan River and Caol Stream.

West Cork Arts Centre covers the Skibbereen and Bantry urban and rural area which stretches from the Beara Peninsula in the west, to Clonakilty in the east, from Dunmanway in the north, to the islands of Cape Clear and Sherkin in the south.

West Cork Arts Centre works with local, national and international artists, arts organisations and other agencies to present a high quality visual art programme that offers the people of West Cork a broad and in-depth experience of contemporary visual arts. The programme includes all aspects of contemporary arts practice from drawing, painting, sculpture and printmaking to performance, sound, installation, lens-based and time-based work and digital media.

Creative learning is at the heart of its activities with a wide range of events, workshops, community-based projects, partnership programmes, screenings, seminars, talks and tours on offer throughout the year. The unique and enriching opportunity to experience and work with real artworks and live artists is explored through many of its integrated and inclusive programmes.

Our multidisciplinary Artists' Residencies provide space for artists to work, network, collaborate, develop projects and engage directly with the public. Having artists working on site creates further opportunities for people to experience how artworks develop over a period of time and adds an extra dimension to the visitor experience at Uillinn.

In partnership with Cork County Council and supported by the Arts Council, West Cork Arts Centre is developing an ambitious contemporary dance programme which presents opportunities for dance research, professional development, performance, workshops and project work with communities both onsite and off, to increase public participation in this dance form and to make high quality cultural experiences accessible for this rural community.

Our HSE partnership programmes with older people and in healthcare settings have gained national recognition for their effectiveness in using existing infrastructures to present meaningful cultural engagements. This model is both imaginative and pragmatic and has nurtured multi- disciplinary arts programmes across the community, with hundreds of West Cork residents in residential care and in the community.

**Go see for yourself ...**

[www.facebook.com/uillinnwestcorkartscentre](http://www.facebook.com/uillinnwestcorkartscentre)

<http://uillinnwestcorkartscentre.blogspot.ie/2016/07/the-move-to-uillinn.html>

[www.westcorkartscentre.com](http://www.westcorkartscentre.com)

<https://vimeo.com/81618736>

## Uillinn Public Engagement Strategy (2017- 2020)



### **Purpose of the Strategy**

Through this document Uillinn: West Cork Arts Centre will explore creative and fresh ways of increasing and developing public engagement and participation in the arts, and the development of opportunities for artists, especially in a rural context.



Working strategically improves our quality of service, and enables us to maintain both creative and pragmatic approaches to programming.

This strategy will achieve two goals:

- Communicate\* our direction and uniqueness.

\* communicating to local authority and the Arts Council our commitment *to growing and diversifying our audiences and to deepening our public engagement* Making Great Art Works (objective 6)

- Support operational effectiveness for the delivery of high quality arts experiences.

Subsequently a work plan for each year will follow.

## **Mission**

Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre is an arts facility that creates opportunities for the people of West Cork to have access to, and engagement with, local and global arts practice of excellence.

## **Vision**

Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre envisions a regional hub of arts excellence, with equity of access to cultural engagements, where all are welcome.

## **Values**

We believe that:

- the arts are critical to a healthy and flourishing society. We respect the right to cultural access for everyone in all our diversity.
- our community is worthy of a quality, thriving space that embraces imagination and freedom of expression, and nurtures creative and free thinking.
- meaningful arts experiences are central to child development and learning at all ages.
- integrity, flexibility, respect and clarity are placed at the heart of all our communications with partners, colleagues, artists and public.
- excellence is placed at the core of practice, our partnerships, collaborations, support of artists and all our public engagements.
- artists and arts organisations require an environment that values and supports their contributions and encourages excellence

### **Governance and Delivery**

The Board of West Cork Arts Centre is the overall body responsible. The Board ensures that a Management Committee is in place to monitor, review and ensure high standards and a clear vision is maintained. The Director, Programme Manager: Education and Community and Operations Manager are responsible for implementing the strategy, ensuring excellent communications.

While our Public Engagement Strategy is a whole organisation action, it is most closely linked to the current Education and Community Programme.

It is recognised that resourcefulness and a high level of experience and expertise, exists within the current management, operations and delivery teams, to implement this plan.



## Uillinn Public Engagement Strategy (2017- 2020)

### Summary: Goals

1. Maintain commitment to 1.1) partnership, 1.2) integrated programming, 1.3) collaborative practice, 1.4) artists' support, 1.5) inclusivity and accessibility
  
2. Maintain excellence in the areas of:-
  - arts and health
  - arts and older people
  - visual arts education for early years, children and young people
  
3. Continue development of dance and performance programmes with emphasis on engaging children and youth audiences
  
4. Remain open to opportunities for developing diversity across all areas
  
5. Respond to:-
  - the advantages presented by our new premises.
  - invitations to participate in community led events and festivals.
  - commercial opportunities coherent with our current expertise and available resources.
  - lack of current staff resources with expertise in marketing, public relations and sales.
  
6. Be an international leader for Participatory Arts in a rural context, corresponding to addressing our own wide geographical and rural environment.

## Goal

## Action

1. **Maintain commitment to partnership, integrated programming, collaborative practice, artists support, inclusivity and accessibility.**

### 1.1 Partnership

We will maintain our shared financial commitments with three key partners, HSE, ETB and CCC, continuing to develop programmes strategically and contributing to the development of policy. Recognising long-term work with identified significant partners is the most effective way to ensure the programmes have the potential for sustainability, share valuable resources, knowledge and increasing our impact locally.

Ensure reports are available, email communication maintained, invitations sent, regular meetings kept and recorded. A high level of planning, excellent communication, transparency and keen negotiation enables these partnerships to perform at best.

We commit to making visible the funding contributions of the Arts Council, Cork County Council, HSE and other significant partners.

We will commit to resourcing and ensuring finances. It is imperative to maintain the current level of resources to deliver. Reduced resources are a threat to quality

We will seek new partnerships to develop Awards for the Studio Residency Programme in the specified area of: Health, Children, Youth and Diversity.

We will seek to maintain our Dance Residency Partnership with our Local Authority and work toward other artform residencies with Local Authorities in Cork and nationwide.

We will seek to develop a biannual Graduate Residency Award with DIT

We will seek to develop a post leaving cert Portfolio course in partnership with CIT

### 1.2 Integrated programming

We will seek links between artists and programme participants, where projects share interests or methodology. Gallery and residency linked programmes enhance artist's public profile, motivate public participation.

Where viable we will invite the exhibiting artists to link with other programmes and public. Creative engagement programming takes advantage of the wide range of artists exhibiting in Uillinn galleries.

We will make links between our participatory programmes and gallery, extending beyond the obvious and ensuring multi-disciplinary links too observing curatorial or thematic links. Hearing stories and engaging in artistic concepts deepens the experience.

### **1.3 Collaborative Practice**

The participatory practice WCAC supports is for a 'conversation' between artists and participants; a learning community where the artworks, the artist and the participants all contribute to the project and to the learning.

The form of participation will be different for each individual. For some, it will be an opportunity to engage directly with an art form: to learn techniques, explore ideas and create new work. For others, it will be an opportunity to engage with the work of others: to watch, listen, enjoy and be challenged by new perspectives and modes of expression. For some the honing of artistic skills and the satisfaction that is derived from finished work will be the most important elements of the experience, while for others, it will be the personal journey undertaken during the creative process, with no product at all. Whatever mode of participation is chosen, the arts experience on offer should be meaningful and of the highest possible quality.

### **1.4 Artists' support**

We respect our symbiotic relationship with artists. We will place emphasis on supporting artists to take lead creative roles, and allowing for flexibility within a managed framework. It is important that professional practitioners delivering the programme can do so in well supported working environment.

We will present a variety of open submission opportunities for a broad range of artists, where priority is given to artists who show a strong commitment to public engagement.

High quality provision requires skills and expertise. WCAC will deliver professional development opportunities to support an experienced, informed and creative team to deliver the programmes.

Ensuring that we have clarity and respect in all our communications by providing working agreements, maintaining workspaces, studio and exhibition spaces.

In all our funding applications we seek fair and equitable remuneration for artists. Steps will be taken to increase current remuneration recognising that there have not been increases for nearly 10 years.

Where policy guides we will ask artists to attend or provide training eg. Child Protection, Health and Safety, manual lifting

We will present learning opportunities for artist to extend their practice: Arts for Health Placement Programme, or their skills: Life Drawing

We will present network opportunities through artist led initiatives, exhibition openings, network meetings and events.

#### 1.5 Inclusivity

We aim to be both inclusive and accessible. We commit to taking action on ensure choices are available in all our art form provision working with our partners COPE Foundation on ensuring inclusivity is integral to our programming.

We will build capacity by providing professional opportunities for artists working collaboratively to gain skills to support an inclusive approach.

We will join in the national dialogue in relation to developing inclusivity, particularly with partners COPE Foundation who recognise Cork as a leader in Inclusive Arts

#### 1.6 Accessibility

To ensure better access we will improve the parking barriers that currently exist for physically disabled users during the building work for the flood relief scheme.

We will actively seek to extend our current accessibility, taking advice and guidance from disability agencies local and national to widen our public service

## 2. Maintain excellence in the areas of

- **arts and health**
- **arts and older people**
- **visual arts education for early years, children and young people**

#### 2.1 Maintain excellence in the areas of arts and health

We will continue to manage and implement Arts for Health Partnership Programme working in a strategic way with our partners HSE, ETB, CCC. (see Programme strategy for further details)

We will work with HSE partners to establish an annual Studio Residency Award for an artist with significant contribution to arts and health

We will make visible the arts and health outreach work at Uillinn in creative ways eg. exhibitions, installations, residencies, project link.

To maximise the visibility we will launch and maintain a website that makes visible the Arts for Health Partnership Programme and the work of the partnership

In response to local demographic, we will maintain our commitment to becoming a Dementia friendly organisation, learning and leading the way in Art and Dementia programming. We will do this through professional development programmes for artists and staff.

## **2.2 Maintain excellence in the areas of arts and older people**

We will continue to develop our two pivotal provisions for older people, Arts for an Active Mind and Arts for Health.

Seek to ensure age linear and integrated programming for a participant centered experience. Creating and highlighting links between active retirement, day care and residential services.

We will maintain links with national partners Age and Opportunity, celebrating Bealtaine at Uillinn and outreach centres annually.

We will maintain and build our local partner relations with West Cork Older People's Network to help us build relevant programming, community links and improve our public communications.

Networking nationally to remain relevant and informed, contributing to national dialogue (Arts and Health Coordinators, Azure)

Continue to bring our significant experience and knowledge to the policy fora nationally and internationally.

Where appropriate we will coordinate links for artists on the Residency Programmes to local older peoples groups in the community such Skibbereen luncheon club, day care centres and active retirement groups in West Cork. Emphasis will be placed on inviting communities to Uillinn.

## **2.3 Maintain excellence in the areas of visual arts education for early years, children and young people**

Commitment to resourcing our Discovery Box programme and commissioning artists for approximately 4 exhibitions a year. Programming of a Discovery Box will correspond with high family visitor numbers to Uillinn eg. Christmas, summer, Easter and October bank holiday, and the suitability of an exhibition. It will also coincide with other 'Creative Learning in the Gallery' programmes such as *In the Picture* to make best use of artist research time.



We will continue to seek innovative ways to share the highest quality, national and international professional practice with our young audience.

Opportunities will be sought to tour the Box through the Arts Council Touring Award.

In support of our community of professional and amateur artists we will develop a new Box for the annual Member exhibition by asking 6 artists members, each to make an activity based on their artwork submitted to the show.

Forging partnership with Túsla is recognised as an important step to sustaining our early years programme.

Maintain a strong commitment to delivering a high quality Primary Schools Programme with our partners at West Cork Education Centre. A new programme *Visual Encounters* will be linked to an Studio Residency Award in which the selected visiting artist will create work in collaboration with primary school children and Schools Coordinator

Annual Primary school teachers professional development linked to *Visual Encounters* will serve to deepen the engagement.

Art Club will remain as our cornerstone programme for out of school visual art encounters. Where possible we should seek to share the extremely high quality content of this programme that attracts children from diverse communities, delivered by two practicing artists working collaboratively.

A commitment will be made to exhibit bi-annually at Uillinn, the work created by the children. Outings to artists studios, art outdoors and guests artists will feature as part of the programme.

Following amalgamation of the three closest schools a new partnership will need to be forged with the new Skibbereen Community School to establish a Transition Year programme and links to our programme for young people

Additional resources will be sought to bring back visual arts programming for Young People. This will be resources through a new partnership with Skibbereen Family Resource Centre and our Studio Residency Programme. We will commit to dedicating a studio to young people for a minimum of six months with a view to extending it as a regular feature.

A review of our Youth Arts Strategy will take place in 2019. This may incorporate Children and Early years.

### **3. Continue development of dance and performance programmes with emphasis on engaging children and youth audiences**

#### **3.1 Dance development**

Referencing strategic statements in *Dance at Uillinn Education and Community Programme, 2015*

West Cork Arts Centre will deliver a dance programme with high artistic content and significant public engagement:

Lead public awareness and appreciation of the value of the dance.

Create opportunities for the people of West Cork to have access to, and engagement with local and global dance practice of excellence.

Enhance the skills and capacity of the local dance sector

We will deliver a diverse dance programme

Each year we will work with partners Cork county Council to apply for Arts Council Dancer in Residence to enable

- o Community- based dance programme
- o Professional development
- o Performance

We will work with partners Croi Glan, COPE Foundation and CoAction to ensure West Cork Inclusive Dance remains a high quality and meaningful dance programme.

We will develop a Production Residency for dancers, choreographers and dance companies to realise their work from idea to performance.

Artist will present sharing of work in progress as part of their artistic development and public engagement process. Priority will be given to dancers/companies in receipt of bursary or project awards.

#### **3.2 Performance**

We will continue to work with dancers who show significant contribution to the progression Irish Contemporary Dance to build audiences in West Cork for contemporary dance suitable for our unique space. We will do this by schedule an annual *Uillinn Dance Performance* programme featuring three performances.

At least two of the three performances will be suitable for family audiences.

#### **3.3 Engaging children and youth audiences**

We will make significant moves to engage more children and youth audiences in our contemporary dance programmes in partnership with West Cork Education Centre.

We will work with dancers to deliver programmes in the schools and at Uillinn linked to performance programme

A new annual Youth Dance programme will be initiated through the Dancer in Residence Programme. Partnership will be forged with the new Skibbereen Community School

We will work to Integrate the Alan Foley Dance Academy, Irish Dancing students with the residency and performance programmes.

We will commit to hosting a high quality touring children's theatre performer/s to reach both schools and general public forging links with Abbey and Babaro.

Rusty Frog Youth Theatre will remain a key programme for engaging young people in high quality Theatre and Performance programme. Partnership with NAYD is an essential part of ensuring a dynamic, ambitious, quality programme is provided.

An ambitious cross artform project will be initiated between Youth dance, art and theatre programmes to be actioned in 2018/19.

#### **4. Remain open to opportunities for developing diversity across all areas**

##### **4. 1 Developing Diversity**

We will work with artists of all diversity, seeking equal opportunity across all programming.

Applications and submissions that show clear aim to engage diverse audiences will be prioritised.

Work with our partners West Cork Development Partnership (Social Inclusion) to address common goals

#### **5. Respond to**

- **the advantages presented by our new premises**
- **invitation to participate in community led events and festivals**
- **commercial opportunities coherent with our current expertise and available resources**

- **lack of current staff resources with expertise in marketing and public relations**

#### **5.1 Respond to Uillinn; our new premises**

Staff will welcome all who enter.

We will ensure our building serves its purpose well. We will work with our users to maintain each space to best standards for their programmed purpose.

We will make creative use of the architectural features and spaces available eg. use the stairwells, lift and non-exhibition spaces creatively to show work, commission music for phones and lift.

We will use wall spaces and windows to publicize our work and share news about programmes and our partner programmes, with high regard for aesthetics.

We will recognise our new venue best supports visual arts, film and dance. This is coherent with our staff expertise. The building also supports literature, live music and performance.

Recognising strengths in Uillinn Galleries, Dance and Studio Residencies, using curatorial themes we will deliver accessible family friendly Creative Engagement programmes. These will take the form of live and virtual tours, library resource, wall information.

Through one or more of partnership, resourcefulness and flexibility we can and regularly support literature, music, drama and performance. When repurposing a space we will be clear with artist and partners a description of the space being used. Communicating flexibility and resourcefulness maybe required.

A review of costing services, customer service methods and ticketing will take place after three years in the premises.

#### **5.2 Invitation to participate in community led events and festivals**

We will plan and budget to participate in at least three community events including Skibbereen St. Patrick's Day Parade, Taste of West Cork and World Mental Health Day.

We will continue to partner with Skibbereen Arts Festival, seeking programming opportunities that stem from our core services, to maximize the reach.

We will always respond positively to new invitations to participate in neighboring community initiatives and do our best within resources to commit our participation.

**5.3 Commercial opportunities coherent with our current expertise and available resources**

We will actively seek commercial opportunities that are coherent with our current expertise.

A clear pricing structure will be made publicly available and we promote available space for arts and community services to rent.

Rental of space that does not involve public relations will be considered.

Submissions that are within our current capacity and involve public relations will be negotiated to include cost of booking and administration services.

Submission that are not within our current capacity and involve public relations will not be considered at this time.

Where substantial commercial opportunities present themselves, the Management Committee will evaluate the organisation's capacity with due consideration to staff roles and responsibilities and organisational goals.

**5.4 Lack of current staff resources with expertise in marketing and public relations**

We will prioritise extending our digital knowledge and build digital capacity. Opportunity will be sought for staff to take part in identified training.

In three years, Uillinn will have in place a staff member responsible for and directing marketing and public relations. The first step taken will be to recruit a Media Intern. This will be actioned through third level Education partnership or Job seeker programme/Tús/CE scheme. A commitment will be made to part-financing the role in year two.

**6. Be an international leader in Participatory Arts in a rural context, corresponding to addressing our own wide geographical and rural environment.**

**6.1 Leader in Participatory Arts in a rural context**

Seek to be sufficiently resourced to deliver participatory arts to the highest standards.

Continue to build capacity to deliver locally. We will support artists in the development of their participatory practice through professional development and mentoring opportunities.

Time permitting connect, research, evaluate and engage in international dialogue by participating in conferences, seminars and learning programmes.

Seek partners for an European learning programme programme in 2020

**6. 2 addressing our own wide geographical and rural environment.**

We will continue to work in partnership with the Inter-Agency Group for the West Cork Islands, to develop arts programming for the island communities and opportunities for island artists

Remain open to arts programming opportunities on Cape clear in partnership with Udarás na Gaeltachta

Use our active partnership programmes and artists team models to reach our community eg. Arts for Health, Primary Schools Programmes, Island projects

Make links with rural transport regards tours and creative learning programmes

Seek a stronger more defined relationships with tourism partners.

