

Annual Plan 2024-25

March 2024





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Accessibility

Arts Council of Wales is committed to being open and accessible and will endeavour to provide information in languages other than Welsh or English on request.



Croeso



Light up the Night, Artis Community



Chair's Foreword

It brings me immense pleasure to introduce our Annual Plan 2024/25. Our Plan builds on our recent work marked by our Investment Review, vibrant cultural events, and strategic funding that have enriched our artistic landscape and propelled our vision of a flourishing arts sector in Wales.

Through our targeted actions, we remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering creativity, diversity, and accessibility in the arts. We are supporting creative innovation and collaboration to enrich emerging talents, and our endeavours continue to inspire and engage audiences across communities in Wales.

Our flagship programmes in Arts and Health and Creative Learning continue to showcase the depth and diversity of Welsh arts and culture on both national and international platforms. These moments of celebration serve as a testament to the vitality and resilience of our creative ecosystem.

Our work internationally also continues to thrive, serving as a beacon of Welsh creativity on the global stage. This year will see the launch of our International Strategy. Through collaborative projects and cultural exchanges we forge meaningful partnerships that transcend borders, showcasing the richness and diversity of Welsh arts to audiences around the world. These experiences not only amplify our collective voice but also foster cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. There are challenges of course, including the ongoing implications of the UK's relationship with Europe, post-Brexit, but we will continue to navigate this challenging environment to allow the voices of Wales to be heard across Europe and the world and for the world to come to Wales. All of this within the principles of sustainability and our responsibilities for climate justice, captured and monitored through our Climate Justice for the Arts Action Plan.

In parallel, our Investment Review encapsulates our strategic initiatives aimed at sustaining and strengthening the arts infrastructure in Wales. Through targeted funding programs, capacity-building initiatives, and partnerships with cultural organisations, we have endeavoured to empower artists, enhance access to the arts, and foster innovation and excellence.

As we both focus on our immediate tasks and look to the future, navigating the complexities of the current landscape we recognise the real challenge of cuts to our funding going forward, and what that may mean for the sector. This year we are working against the backdrop of the 10.5% reduction in our Welsh Government funding, whilst striving to support the sustainability of our culture, arts and creativity to help ensure its continued development, opportunities and legacy, now and for future generations.

The Council remains dedicated to its mission of championing the arts and cultural heritage of Wales. We recognise the transformative power of the arts in enriching lives, stimulating economies, and building cohesive communities, and we are committed to ensuring that these benefits reach every corner of our nation.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our partners, stakeholders, and supporters who play a vital role in shaping our work and our achievements and the dedicated staff and Council Members of the Arts Council. Together, we have laid a strong foundation for the future, one that is rooted in creativity, inclusivity, and sustainability.

Thank you for your continued trust and collaboration as we journey forward, guided by our shared passion for the arts and the belief in their enduring impact on society.

Warm regards,

Maggie Russell Chair



Chief Executive's Foreword

I am delighted to present to you this Annual Plan for 2024-25.

This is the first Annual Plan guided by the new 10year strategic framework, which sets out our vision, mission, core values and principles as well as key goals and commitments.

When it comes to looking forward for a strategic framework of this kind, it always makes sense to look back, look around, and look forward. We formulated our new strategic framework based on the Royal Charter granted to us 30 years ago in 1994, the Wellbeing of the Future Generations (Wales) Act, and our collective long-term vision for the arts. However, the experiences of the last few years have brought sharply into focus the need to be agile and responsive to unforeseen change, therefore we have allowed within the framework, I believe, plenty of room for growth and flexibility, if and when that is the right thing to do.

Articulated in the 10-year Strategy are three simple goals:

Develop

Develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and sustainable practice of the arts.

Connect

Work together to improve the opportunity for the people of Wales to experience and enjoy the arts.

Promote

Collaborate with partners to promote a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

Duets, Ballet Cymru (Image: Sian Trenberth Photography)



These are the goals which steer our Annual Plan this year. Of course, we are delivering them within the context of our recent Investment Review, a reduction in Welsh Government funding of 10.5% this year, and a challenging economic backdrop where both organisations and many individuals are experiencing the effects of inflation and cost of living pressures.

However, we believe the actions identified in this Annual Plan are achievable. There is much work to be done, and the challenges are significant, but I am confident that with the commitment of our Council and the dedication of our staff we have the ability to work with the sector to ensure quality arts experiences remain central to daily life in Wales.

Dafydd Rhys Chief Executive



Our mission

The role of the Arts Council of Wales is to create an environment where the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts can flourish and where everybody in Wales can engage with the arts.

We want a Wales of ambition and fairness where the most exciting arts are created; arts that are integral to the health and wellbeing of the nation, relevant to all communities and where opportunities exist for the voices of Wales to inspire and be inspired by the world around us.



About us



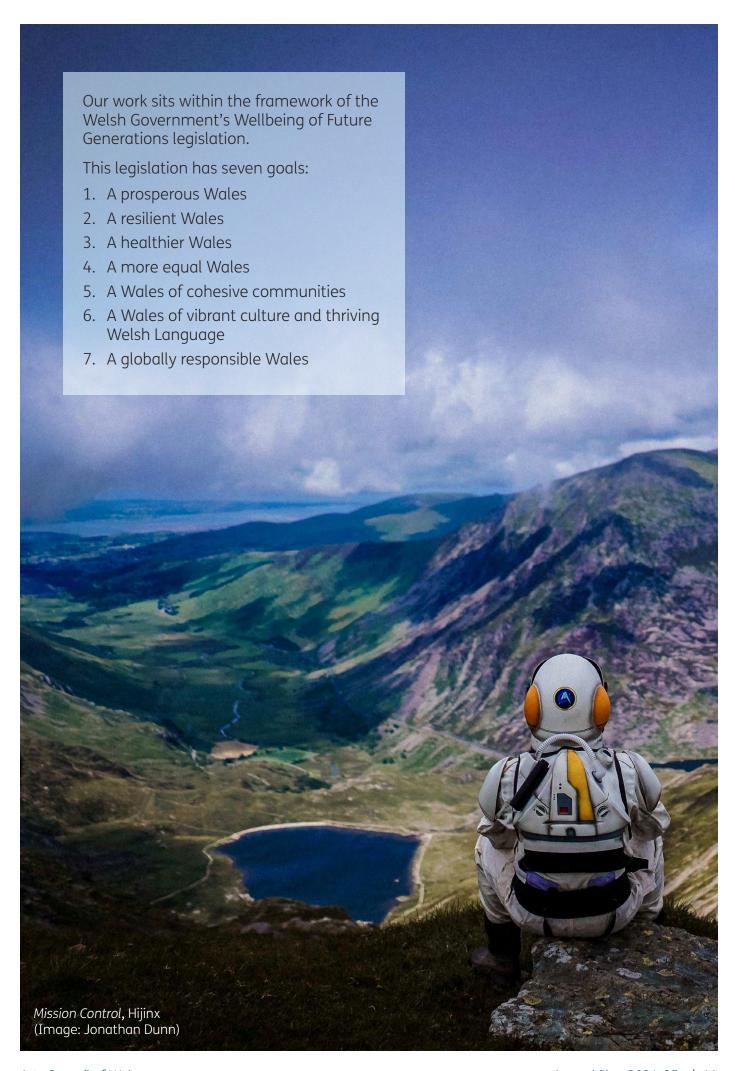
Arts Council of Wales is a registered charity. established by a Royal Charter, funded and supported by the Welsh Government.

We are the country's official public body for funding and developing the arts. Every day, people across Wales enjoy and take part in arts activities and we support artists and organisations to create work and reach as many people as possible.

Our work is made possible by using the public funds that are made available to us by the Welsh Government, and by distributing the money we receive as a good cause from the National Lottery. We support, and are supported by, a vibrant arts community that

spans the length and breadth of the country. From care homes and hospitals to village halls, schools, festivals and the international stage, our partners in tourism, education, sports, environment and health, help us show that the arts can make a difference – to our wellbeing, in connecting and inspiring each other, and in creating a fairer and more equal Wales.

Working together with the Welsh Government and other partners we support and promote the important contribution that the arts make to Wales and the World – cultural, social, health, educational, environmental and economic. We do this by investing in Wales' artists, organisations and communities.



This plan reflects these goals and are informed by "Five ways of working" that define our approach:

Long term

This Annual Plan sets out our key tasks in the delivery of our new 10 year Strategic Framework. Other key programmes of work will also be considered in line with this Plan, including the outcomes of our Investment Review and the development of the Welsh Government Culture Strategy. Additionally, the impact of specific areas of work, for example on Climate Justice, Welsh Language and Widening Engagement, will be in support of Welsh Government's own longer-term plans, including Net Carbon 0, Cymraeg 2050, Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and LGBTQ+ Plan.

Integration

The six principles developed during the Investment Review consultation process are all inter-linked and support the Well-being goals as seen in the diagram below.

Collaboration

We will work with a number of partners and stakeholders within the arts and culture sectors and beyond. Our main partners include several departments of Welsh Government, Future Generations Commissioner, partner organisations, artists and creative freelancers, audiences, and the arts organisations we support.

Involvement

Our work will include engagement and consultation with the wider sector and the public, particularly those from underrepresented groups and communities. Analysis of data, research, feedback, and evaluation will be central to our planning and development of future work.

Prevention

We will continue to reflect on and improve the way we support and develop of the arts in Wales. Through our relationships and engagement with artists, organisations, audiences and communities we will collectively use the power of the arts to address inequalities and help prevent harm to others and our planet.

Our values

Ambition

Ensuring the arts we fund enrich and reflect the needs and aspirations of contemporary Wales, making great things happen at all levels, impacting locally, resonating globally.

Respect

Treating everyone – clients, stakeholders, employees, the creative sector and general public – with dignity and value, irrespective of background, status, age or beliefs and acknowledging their unique contributions to the arts and culture – locally and globally.

Responsibility

Acting ethically and transparently, being fully accountable for our decisions and their outcomes, evaluating and learning from our actions to help drive positive outcomes and foster a culture of trust and improved opportunity for all.

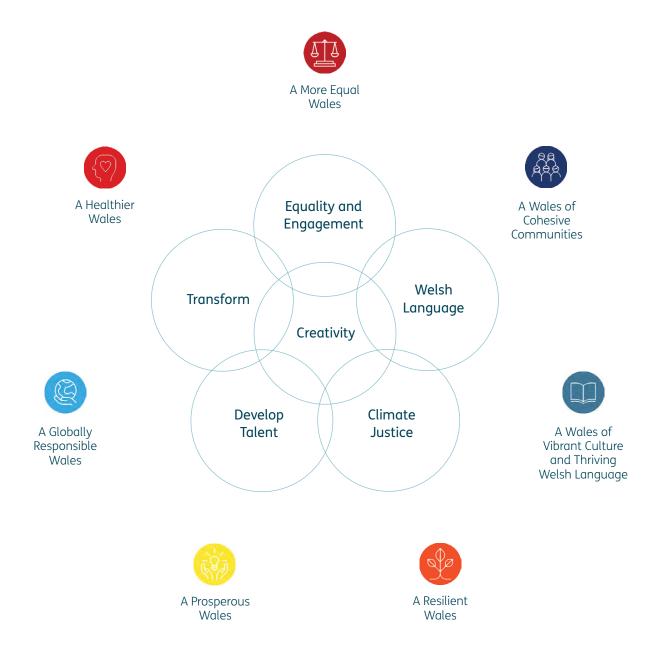


Our strategy

We have developed a new 10-year Strategy which will be launched this year. Closely aligned with the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, it will also link to the Welsh Government's Programme for Government. Our Strategy is a framework – it will be flexible and respond to what's currently needed as well as being relevant to new developments and changes. This 10-year Strategy has our future generations in mind.

To achieve this, we will be reviewing and further developing our Strategy at regular intervals throughout its 10 years. This work will be done through regular consultation and building feedback and evaluation into our operational systems. The changes and updates will be communicated through Annual Plans and Communications Strategies.

Our Strategy has been shaped by the 6 principles developed and consulted upon in our Investment Review 2023. These principles underpin all of our work going forward, and align with the 7 wellbeing goals.



Introducing the 6 Principles

Creativity

Art in all its forms has the power to connect and help us understand each other and the world around us. It challenges our thinking and sparks our imagination. It brings joy and hope to audiences and participants.

Creativity is in everything and everyone we support. We want to see a wide variety of creative forms and practices, developed with audiences and communities in mind, encouraging artistic innovation of the highest quality.

Equality and engagement

Everyone has the right to enjoy and take part in our culture, language, landscape, and art.

Arts and culture in Wales should reflect the lives of everyone – they belong to us all.

We will seek to remove the barriers and challenges faced in experiencing the arts. We will ensure people from diverse communities are fully represented in the workforce, as leaders, decision makers, creators, visitors, participants and audience members.

Welsh language

Our aim is for Welsh language and culture to be at the centre of creativity; it belongs to everyone. It offers creative celebration and inspires connection between communities.

We will encourage and share creative opportunities that contribute to growth in the use and ownership of the Welsh language. We will support the arts sector to place the Welsh language at the centre of creativity and communities by asking what is needed, listening and learning from each other. We will work together to increase the availability of Welsh language services and creative opportunities.



Climate iustice

We are committed to championing the important role of the arts in transforming our society and economy to tackle the climate and nature emergencies. At the heart of our approach is a recognition that climate change is about more than the environmental repercussions – it is about addressing social justice and inequality as part of the solution.

We will support the arts sector to develop creativity that inspires people to take action for climate justice, and work towards an environmentally sustainable and globally responsible arts sector grounded in social justice.

Develop talent

We will create an environment to help artists thrive.

We need to make sure that there are pathways that allow people from all backgrounds to develop sustainable creative careers, skills, and leadership.

Working collaboratively, we will ensure that the opportunities available for artists are distributed fairly, that we provide fair work and improve outcomes for the people of Wales, now and in the future.

Transform

We will seize new opportunities and be agile and confident enough to respond in a positive way to all the changes happening around us. We will take risks, build resilience and be responsive to change, whilst remaining relevant to the people and communities of Wales. We want to find the best opportunities for the arts, and to learn from what's happened in the past and to share what works best.



Our 3 goals

Our Strategy is based on the 3 Goals that reflect our original remit outlined in our Royal Charter and the Wellbeing goals of the Future Generations Act. These goals are:

Develop Develop and improve the knowledge, understanding

and sustainable practice of the arts.

Connect Work together to improve the opportunity for the

people of Wales to experience and enjoy the arts.

Promote Collaborate with partners to promote a Wales of

vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language.

We have identified how each of the 6 principles link to these goals, and the way that this work supports the objectives outlined in the Welsh Government's Term of Government Remit Letter to us.

The following icons are used to identify these relationships:

Six Principles



Creativity



Equality and Engagement



Welsh Language



Climate Justice



Develop Talent



Transform

Term of Government Remit Letter Goals



- Decarbonisation;
- Addressing all inequality and achieving an anti-racist Wales;
- Improving access and participation for all;
- Promoting health and well-being;
- Creating opportunities for young people; and
- Projecting a powerful and positive image of Wales to the world

We have identified key tasks across our three goals that will provide support for the sector, audiences, and the communities of Wales. This will address the current needs of the sector and communities of Wales, capturing the learning needed to ensure longer-term impact and legacy. This Annual Plan reflects the initial phase of our 10 year Strategy. The key tasks we have identified for progression during 2023-24 are set out on the following pages.

Develop

Develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and sustainable practice of the arts.

Key task Prioritise











Improving access and participation for all Decarbonisation

We will

- Prioritise the work we need to deliver in consideration of the needs of the sector and available resources, including financial resources.
- Publish our new Strategic Framework.
- Monitor and report on progress of our multi-year funded organisations against Year 1 of their Funding Agreement commitments.
- With additional funding support from Welsh Government deliver a new funding programme for Investment in Theatres.
- Develop a Capital Funding Plan.
- Progress our published strategic commitments resulting from our Investment Review that we have prioritised for 2024-25.
- Publish our plan for Climate Justice and the Arts and deliver its Year 1 commitments.
- Deliver the third year of our Creative Nature partnership with Natural Resources Wales, which includes the Fellowship Programme.
- Publish our Welsh Language plan and deliver its Year 1 commitments.
- Publish our new Strategic Equality Plan and deliver its Year 1 commitments.
- In partnership with Amgueddfa Cymru, we will continue to deliver the commitments and key actions in our joint Widening Engagement Action Plan.
- Develop and deliver our plans to increase opportunities for children and young people to engage with and experience the arts, focussing on those living with poverty.
- Publish our International Strategy and deliver Year 1 action plan.

Key task Analyse and identify









We will

- Commission a review of English Language Theatre in Wales and consider the Report's findings and recommendations, making initial preparations for their implementation.
- Commission a review of dance in Wales, including community dance, and consider the Report's findings and recommendations.
- Review our support for traditional music and consider future investment needs.
- Evaluate and relaunch our Creative Steps programme.
- Apply the 6 principles and 5 balancing factors and supporting data developed for our Investment Review across other areas of our work. This will inform our policy and decision making, providing opportunities for more people to enjoy the arts in new and exciting forms.
- Commission an Economic Impact Assessment of our investment arts in Wales.
- Evaluate our engagement with our Associates and deliver a new call out to refresh our pool of potential Associates, ensuring that under-represented voices and those with lived experiences are included across areas of our work in addition to grant making decisions.

Key task Take action









Improving access and participation for all Addressing all inequality and achieving an anti-racist Wales

We will

- Take action to support the current infrastructure for dance in Wales, pending the outcomes of our review into dance and community dance in Wales.
- We will develop business support resources and training for organisations, to support transformation and resilience.
- Undertake a review of our Lottery Funding.
- We will continue to implement recommendations and commitments outlined in Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and LGBTQ+ Plan.

Key task Simplify









Improving access and participation for all

We will

- Review and simplify our grant funding opportunities and application process.
- Review and update our website to improve access to our information and resources.
- Improve our own internal operational systems to become more efficient.
- Introduce simplified and tailored reporting arrangements for our multi-year funded organisations.
- Undertake a review of our CollectorPlan Scheme.

Key task Career development









Improving access and participation for all Creating opportunities for young people

We will

- Support RAMPS Cymru to create meaningful and sustainable change to improve the representation of disabled people across the mainstream theatre sector in Wales.
- Work with partners such as Creative Wales to identify training and skills development opportunities in the sector where there is most need.
- Advocate for fair pay and continued professional development and training opportunities.
- Develop sustainable work opportunities targeted for people from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds as well as disabled people.
- Implement and support initiatives that will protect and sustain careers and livelihoods for those working and who wish to work in the arts, including supporting the work developed under the Freelancers Pledge in partnership with Creative Wales.
- Create mentoring and training opportunities to work with the sector to take forward our Welsh language commitments. We will co-ordinate this work to help identify opportunities to work collectively.
- Invest in opportunities for training, skills development and capacity building to support organisations and individuals to meet their commitments to climate justice.

Connect

Work together to improve the opportunity for the people of Wales to experience and enjoy the arts.

Key task Working with others







We will

- Progress Welsh Government's National Contemporary Art Gallery project.
- Progress the Capital development of Theatr Clwyd.
- Continue to work in partnership with the Arts Councils within the UK and Ireland, on specific initiatives.
- Progress our MoU with Creative Wales to ensure we maximise opportunities and efficiencies in the sector, and prioritise equalities and inclusion in all our work.
- Continue to work with national organisations to co-deliver programmes of work which align our priorities of equalities and widening engagement, Welsh language, and developing talents.
- Continue with our partnerships to support underfunded genres of music and creators, such as Power Up! and Accelerator with PRS Foundation.
- Collaborate with Welsh Government and relevant stakeholders to commission the research needed to establish baseline data on carbon emissions and the environmental sustainability of the arts sector. This, in turn, will provide recommendations for the right model of support to help the sector in Wales to reach net zero, adapt to climate change, and address the nature emergency.

Key task Community









Improving access and participation for all Addressing all inequality and achieving an anti-racist Wales

We will

- Explore, develop and implement programmes which support communities to shape and design their own arts experiences, in line with our commitment to cultural democracy.
- In developing our programmes we will prioritise under-represented communities and those in areas of high deprivation.
- Hold a series of National Conversations on the arts with a Wales, UK and International focus.
- Develop regional and national networks to provide peer support and mentoring around Widening Engagement to look collectively at best approach and share practice.
- Develop our relationships with local authorities to see how we can work together to ensure the best arts for everyone, especially in areas that:
 - > are underserved by our funding
 - where we co-invest in arts organisations or programming (for example, venues).

Key task Children and Young People









Improving access and participation for all Creating opportunities for young people

We will

- Continue to work in partnership with Welsh Government and education sector to deliver year 3 of the 3 year extension to our Creative Learning programme.
- Develop and launch a funding scheme or strand which will focus on children and young people living in areas of high deprivation and those who face life challenges.
- Develop and launch a strand in Create which provides opportunities for young people to lead on the creation and production of their own art.
- Ensure young people are involved in the development of our strategies, programmes and decision making.

Key task Wellbeing







Improving access and participation for all Promoting health and well-being

We will

- In partnership with the NHS Confederation and Health Boards, continue to develop our Arts, Health and Wellbeing in Wales programme.
- Progress our work with Welsh Government on securing a joint plan for future delivery of an Arts, Health and Wellbeing programme.
- Build on our partnership with the Baring Foundation to develop a 4 year programme with a focus on promoting art which will help improve mental health.



Promote

Collaborate with partners to promote a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language

Key task Partnerships









Improving access and participation for all Projecting powerful and positive image of Wales to the World

We will

- Contribute to and support development of Welsh Government's new Culture Strategy.
- Work with the Welsh Government to deliver the International Strategic Partnership agreement to support the realisation of its International Strategy and action plans. This includes:
 - International strategic partnership with Welsh Government in delivering its international strategy and action plans (Year of Wales in India 2024, Year of Wales in Japan 2024, and developing the UN Decade of Indigenous Languages programme in Wales).
 - the International Future Generations Evaluation Impact Framework & IOF review
 - new partnership with British Council (India, Japan, collaborations at annual events (Focus Wales, Edinburgh and WOMEX in 2024) and Arts, Health and Wellbeing, Creative Learning and Climate Justice as developing themes)
 - > International Showcase programme.
- Agree and sign a new partnership agreement with British Council.
- Increase partnership working with Welsh Language Commissioner and National Centre for Learning Welsh.
- Revitalise existing partnerships and seek new partnerships to develop and progress shared priority areas, through increased investment and resources.

Key task Resource







Improving access and participation for all

We will

• Allocate resources to raise the profile of the sector through continued advocacy for the arts and financial support from new and existing sources.



Key task Celebrating





Projecting powerful and positive image of Wales to the World

We will

- Use and publish stories to share and highlight progress of our key objectives and promote good practice with others.
- Allocate resource to raise the profile of the arts sector in Wales and internationally.
- Invest in our own communications and brand so we can simplify our messaging and reach further with our advocacy.



Arts Council of Wales

Measuring our success

We do this in a number of different ways:

- reviewing funding data.
- surveying the activities and outputs of our multi-year funded organisations, in response to the outcome of the Investment Review.
- public consultations.
- evaluating the impact of specific initiatives or funding programmes.
- reporting on our progress to the Welsh Government, our Council and its Committees.
- publishing annual reports.



In the tables on the following pages we give overall examples of some of the ways that we measure our success.

Goal	Measure of Success
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Develop

We will have published our new 10 year Strategy and supporting Welsh Language, International, Strategic Equality and Climate Justice in the Arts action plans, setting out our long term vision for the arts in Wales and contributing to Welsh Government priorities, including Cymraeg 2050, Anti-racist Wales Action plan, LGBTQ+ Action Plan and Net Carbon 0.

Through delivery of our published strategic commitments from our Investment Review we would have made significant progress in addressing identified gaps in current provision, including areas such as English language theatre, dance and music.

National Conversations will help inform development of our plans and the impact of our work would be evidenced through the publication of our Economic Impact Assessment Report.

Our organisations in receipt of new multiyear funding agreements will be supported to deliver their proposals which support and promote our own goals and Mission. We will be able to gather data to develop a more unified picture of the impact of the arts in Wales and use this to advocate and shape future work.

We become more efficient ourselves, our information and funding opportunities easier to access, and our communication clear and simplified.

We will be continuing to work for fair pay, greater stability and career and development opportunities for arts organisations, artists and creative workers.

We will have developed increased opportunities for engagement and sustainable careers in the arts, including those for young people and people from under-represented groups and communities.

Impact

Our long term vision for the arts is understood and supported.

The enhanced focus on Welsh provision will lead to new opportunities for all to enjoy, take part and work in the arts, encouraging increased input into the development of arts activity and our own policy, and encourage speakers of all abilities.

We will be able to evidence the impact of our work, financially and on wellbeing goals, including health and the environment, and in support of Welsh Government goals across Equalities, Welsh language and climate justice.

Goal	Measure of Success
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Connect

Through our financial and resource investment and partnership working, key projects are visibly progressed, which will bring new and increased opportunities for arts employment, engagement and enjoyment.

Increased opportunities for young people and children to access creative activity and apply this to everyday learning, both inside and outside of the school setting.

Developmental areas and strategies include increased representation of young people's voices.

Increased resources to continue and further build on our Arts, Health and Wellbeing Programme.

Increased provision and resource to support and deliver strategic arts interventions focused on improving people's health and mental health.

Impact

Existing barriers to engagement removed ensuring that more people from all communities and backgrounds in Wales will be able to access the arts through improved provision and infrastructure and choose to make the arts part of their lives.

Re-prioritisation of funding will ensure a fairer distribution of investment and provide opportunities for more D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people and ethnically and culturally diverse people to direct their own creative offer for their communities and develop their creative talent.

Arts programmes are led and co-produced by communities and people empowered to shape and create their own arts and cultural experiences.

Through our direct action and partnership working, the arts will become more inclusive and representative of all individuals and communities in Wales. This will drive change across the sector and lead to new opportunities to enjoy, take part and work in the arts.

Continued and enhanced opportunities for schools and young people to develop their creativity and creative skills and to participate in and experience the arts through the extended Creative Learning programme.

Increased opportunities for young people and emerging artists to inform our policy and decision making, work in the arts, including opportunities outside of the school setting.

More people benefit from engaging with Arts, Health and Wellbeing focussed projects and programmes.

Goal	Measure of Success

Promote

Maximising our public value partnerships, we will be working with others to co-invest in strategic work so we can achieve more together.

Delivering the International Strategic Partnership agreement with Welsh Government that support its International Strategy and action plans. This work includes developing programmes for priority regions and countries, for example Year of Wales in India 2024, Year of Wales in Japan 2024 and developing the UN Decade of Indigenous Languages programme in Wales.

Agree, sign and deliver a new 3 year partnership agreement with British Council to include India, Japan, collaborations at annual events (Focus Wales, Edinburgh and WOMEX in 2024) and Arts, Health and Wellbeing, Creative Learning and Climate Justice as developing themes.

A refocus on our international activity and priorities will be reflected in the draft Future Generations evaluation framework for international work, which is currently being developed, and will be used to review the International Opportunities Fund. It will also allow us to respond to the needs and gaps identified through the Investment Review process. These will include testing out new approaches to artists development, Showcasing and networking, and reflect on the learning of Cymru Fenis 10 / Explore Wales / Seeding the Future and the Edinburgh Fringe.

Increased representation of the Welsh language across the Portfolio Members, including through resources, Boards and creative output.

Impact

Partnerships and collaborations are working towards shared objectives allowing for increased resources, maximised efficiencies and shared learnings which will lead to more impact.

We'll be able to demonstrate that we're making a clear and positive contribution to the Well-being goals through our work home and abroad.

The arts will become more inclusive and representative of all individuals and communities, locally, nationally and internationally.

Improved Welsh Language provision and opportunities across the Sector and for audience and participants.