

# New Stream – Fundraising Fellowship, Dublin

## Case Study: Helium Arts

Fundraising Fellowship  
Dublin

*Business to Arts' New Stream programme in partnership with Dublin City Council's Dublin's Culture Connects*



Investing in capacity, communicating impact and focusing on major gift fundraising

**Fundraising Fellowship, Dublin** is a partnership between *Business to Arts* and Dublin City Council Culture Company (formerly Dublin's Culture Connects). Fundraising Fellowship, Dublin is part of *Business to Arts*' New Stream programme, in development with Dublin City Council Culture Company as part of their commitment to developing capacity building and peer exchange programmes. In 2016, four cultural organisations were offered 50% part-funding toward the employment of full-time 'Fundraising' or 'Marketing & Fundraising' human resources over a 24-month period. A structured programme of training and mentorship with *Business to Arts* supported the recruited Fellows. This case study is part of a series of case studies, which highlight the achievements and challenges faced by the Fellows and their organisations throughout their time on the programme.

### Organisation Profile

Helium Arts is an award-winning children's arts and health organisation set up by children's theatre maker and trained play specialist Helene Hugel in 2009. Its creative projects take place in hospital, health and community settings around Ireland, transforming the healthcare experience of young people and those who care for them through art, imagination and play.

Its aim is to give a meaningful creative and social outlet to children and teenagers facing isolation, anxiety and depression because of long-term illness or disability.

To date Helium Arts has supported over 3,000 children and their families in 11 counties across Ireland through its creative programme. Using the arts in their many forms, professional artists facilitate multidisciplinary creative projects that promote and support expression, collaboration, creativity and wellbeing among children living with illness.

When Helium Arts joined the Fundraising Fellowship, Dublin programme, it had only one full-time employee. The Fellowship has allowed the organisation to invest in capacity and commit to a realistic and achievable fundraising strategy. Anna McCarthy was appointed Development Executive for the Fellowship.



Young boy at Helium's Pop Up at the Central Remedial Clinic for Cruinníú na nÓg 2018.

*“There has been a huge amount of learning throughout the Fellowship. We received great support and feedback on our fundraising and marketing strategies and related activities over two years. Being connected to Business to Arts and the work of Dublin City Council Culture Company is very empowering.”*

Anna McCarthy, Development Manager,  
Helium Arts

### 2017

Funds raised: €149,908

Amount of funds raised attributable to Fellow: €66,892

### 2018

Funds raised: €207,399

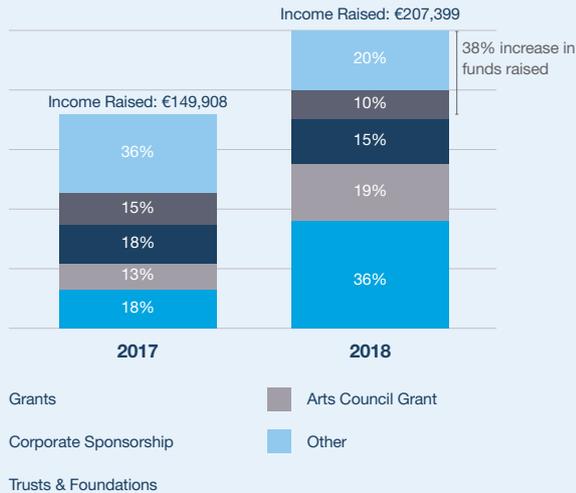
Amount of funds raised attributable to Fellow: €76,294

**2019 – 2021:** Committed funds: €280,000

FTE Staff: 3

FTE dedicated to fundraising: 1

## Sources of Contributed Income 2017 & 2018



### The Challenge

When McCarthy took on her first role at Helium Arts, the organisation had a strong track record of delivering high quality creative projects. However, with Hugel as the sole employee, and a small board of only three members, the organisation had limited capacity for development activities.

The three ongoing relationships which provided their main sources of funding included the Arts Council, the Ireland Funds and the BNP Paribas Foundation. Other sources of funding were largely based around applying for small grants and other opportunities as they arose.

Helium Arts had participated in the *Business to Arts* For Impact Fundraising Training and was working to increase capacity in this manner. The challenge was the internal capacity to deliver this, which the Fellowship helped alleviate.

### Fundraising – Strategy for Success

Fundraising Fellowship, Dublin had most impact on Helium Arts’ ability to develop its fundraising strategy. The Fellowship provided Helium Arts with a network of experts and leaders from a range of sectors and industries. The organisation was able to receive invaluable feedback on its development, fundraising and marketing plans. As a result, its fundraising activities are more focused and realistic in terms of targets and time invested.

Through the Fellowship, Helium Arts has developed a streamlined system for prospecting and maintaining continuous engagement with potential supporters and partners.

Regular networking has become a key activity for Helium Arts. The team has found that continuing to engage outside the office proves the power of relationship building. To help with this, they have a monthly meeting target, with regular team

meetings to report back on progress in terms of new and developing relationships.

It is also developing a CRM system that will help the team become more connected and strategic in terms of pipelines, prospecting and relationship management. In tandem with this, it continuously develops its marketing activities to support and enhance relationship management and development.

*“The fact that Fundraising Fellowship, Dublin supported Anna personally was a huge benefit to the organisation. Fundraising can be a lonely business, in which the fundraiser needs to fight her corner in order to do the job efficiently and effectively. Sometimes this requires organisational change and development which might seem unrelated to fundraising. The Fellowship supported Anna to grow in confidence in her role so she could feel she could stand her ground when negotiating for those necessary changes.”*

Helene Hugel, Chief Executive, Helium Arts

### Marketing – Strategy for Success

Through the Fellowship, Helium Arts’ approach to marketing has significantly changed. Previously, communications were less focused and generic.

Since 2018, the organisation has focused its case for support and marketing messaging. This has empowered the team to speak more confidently about its work and the change they want to effect for children living with illness in Ireland.

Helium Arts now regularly engages with families and other stakeholders to gather their stories, which further helps to reinforce its impact and the need for what it does. It communicates this information to funders and supporters to show them how their support has made a difference, highlighting the impact further investment can have.

Significant work has been done on Helium Arts’ brand image. This has included a reworking of the logo, organisational tagline and marketing messages as well as developing a new website.



Helium Arts Programme

While Helium Arts has developed core organisational messages, it continuously updates these to be in line with how its work is evolving. It has also developed planning systems and tools that help with organising communications activity - including social media, emails and more targeted communications.

### Impact of Fellowship – Key Developments Grant Writing

Building on existing relationships, Helium Arts identified key target areas to focus fundraising activities on. Securing a larger multi-annual grant was a key priority. In 2018, it secured €280,000 (€70,000 from Creative Ireland and €210,000 from a private trust) for three years to establish its model for growth in regional locations across Ireland. As a result, they can expect to reach up to four times more children and families per year. Securing this funding has empowered Helium Arts to leverage the support to secure additional investment and apply for other funding. Its Arts Council funding doubled in 2018 and doubled again in 2019 and Helium was recommended for multi-annual funding for the first time since its establishment. The organisation is now in a position where it has secured about 50% of the total funds needed to achieve its plan for growth by 2022.

### Creative Health Hubs

Between 2017 and 2018, through support from Fundraising Fellowship, Dublin, Helium Arts established a new model for growth - Creative Health Hubs. With this model, it plans to run a continuous programme of activity in Cork, Limerick, Galway and Dublin by 2022.

The first Creative Health Hubs are now running in Cork and Limerick where Helium Arts is developing an “arts on referral” service. This supports the medical community in their work with young patients and gives children and families a meeting point to be creative, play, have fun, make friends and take back childhoods lost by illness.

### Conclusion

Fundraising Fellowship, Dublin has helped Helium Arts to develop a focused fundraising strategy and has led to a new direction for the organisation in terms of marketing. It has significantly boosted its funding and reach on the island of Ireland as a result of being part of the programme.

### Fellow Profile



Anna McCarthy was appointed as Development Executive at Helium Arts in 2017 under Fundraising Fellowship, Dublin programme. In 2018, Anna was promoted to Development Manager.

After finishing school, she studied event management and worked in restaurant management for a number of years before travelling to south-east Asia to start a new venture with two friends. Over the next three years, they set up Cultural Canvas Thailand, a volunteer programme to support NGOs and social causes in Chiang Mai. This was McCarthy’s introduction to developing and growing a social enterprise and working within the non-profit sector.

When she returned to Ireland, McCarthy moved to Waterford to study, while also managing cultural and music events. She attended University College Dublin’s MA in Cultural Policy & Arts Management. Her research focused on the sustainability of non-profit arts organisations in the context of the economic downturn. After graduating in 2014, she joined Helium Arts in the role of Development Coordinator.

For more information see [newstream.ie](http://newstream.ie)  
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### Core Skills/Learning/Activities

- ✓ Strategic/Business plans
- ✓ Marketing plans
- ✓ Fundraising plans
- ✓ Understanding and communicating organisational impact
- ✓ Ongoing development of prospect and predisposition lists
- ✓ Preparing and making the pitch
- ✓ Board engagement & ongoing development
- ✓ One-to-one mentoring sessions
- ✓ Presentation skills
- ✓ Pitching opportunities
- ✓ International exchange – The Netherlands/Belgium
- ✓ Local community partnership (Common Ground)
- ✓ Job specifications