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Catalyst  
Strategy 2023–2028

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## About Business to Arts

For more than three decades, Business to Arts has served as a vital link between the business community and the arts world in Ireland, making us a trusted and indispensable partner to countless organisations and individuals. We provide exceptional opportunities to engage with creativity, innovation, and cultural diversity, driving positive social impact by supporting the growth and sustainability of the arts sector.

Front Cover Artwork:  
“Synergy” by Aoife Bambury, 2023



1

## Contents

Introduction from our Chair	2
Introduction from our Chief Executive	3
Executive Summary	4
Our Purpose, Mission & Vision	5
<b>Strategic Priority 1</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Stimulating Growth &amp; Transformation</b>	
Unlock potential	8
Broaden and deepen the financial ecosystem available to the arts sector in Ireland	9
<b>Strategic Priority 2</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Catalysing Purposeful Partnerships</b>	
Foster responsible and sustainable development	12
<b>Strategic Priority 3</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Scaffolding our Strategy</b>	
Secure our own organisation's future	16



**Davina Saint**  
Chair

## We are proud of the positive impact we have had over our 35 year history.

Business to Arts is privileged to be the only organisation sitting at an intersection of business and the arts in Ireland, and we are proud of the positive impact we have had over our 35 year history. Business to Arts has been instrumental in building trust and credibility between the two sectors to the benefit of both and our Board believes in the relevance and necessity of this work.

This strategic plan charts the direction that reflects the ambitions of our new CEO, the team and this Board. It builds on a review of the role of Business to Arts and most importantly on a consultation with our members and stakeholders, informed by the lens of the current and future environment we navigate.

We are enormously appreciative of our corporate and cultural members who continue to inspire us to deliver greater impact for society through the investment in the arts in Ireland. In particular, I wish to thank the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media for their support over the years on key projects such as the ongoing Fundraising Fellowship. We look forward to engaging proactively with more colleagues across the public sector to explore ways to increase investment and opportunities for the arts sector.

We will continue to seek active partnership with business large and small across the country to amplify and celebrate the power and accessibility of the arts and we welcome new conversations with those who have yet to experience the positive value that supporting the arts can bring to your business, your customers, and your community.

It has been a great joy for me to Chair the Board of Business to Arts over the last number of years and it is with great pride that the Board presents the next phase of our development via this strategy.

**Davina Saint**  
Chair



**Louise O'Reilly**  
Chief Executive

## We believe that arts and culture can be Ireland's greatest renewable resource if it is supported in a sustainable way.

We believe that arts and business working together can play a transformative role in shaping a diverse society enriched with cultural engagement and participation.

In developing this strategy, we asked ourselves a number of key questions: how could we add and create meaningful value for our members and society?; how could we support and harness the creativity and innovation of our broad network?; and how could we bring fresh perspectives to critical matters that affect our members?

What follows is indicative of our ambition to address these questions and embed our relevance for our members.

Our job is to stimulate synergies between business and the arts, to unlock the immense potential that lies within Ireland's arts and culture, and to create the conditions for future collaboration across the corporate and cultural sectors for positive social impact. We are committed to sharing our achievements, challenges, and learnings along the way.

We know that meaningful change can only be achieved through collective effort. We welcome open conversations with visionary leaders across the private and public sectors, as well as individuals passionate about the arts and culture, to help deliver upon the ambition of this strategy and to forge partnerships and collaborations that transcend boundaries.

With your support we can nurture an enduring and vibrant arts and culture sector that will enrich Ireland for generations to come. I look forward to working with you towards this goal.

**Louise O'Reilly**  
Chief Executive





## Executive Summary

We will help shape a vibrant and resilient arts ecosystem that benefits society as a whole.

This strategic plan embodies innovation, collaboration, and sustainability as the driving forces behind our efforts to support a thriving arts sector. By leveraging collective expertise, fostering partnerships, and promoting responsible practices, the investment we encourage will help shape a vibrant and resilient arts ecosystem that benefits society as a whole.

We intend to research and pilot new initiatives to help us to innovate new cross-sectoral models and investment opportunities for the arts by exploring alternative private investment mechanisms and cultural finance opportunities; supporting the career development of artists and creative practitioners; and the sustainable development of artists spaces and cultural tenancy models.

We will work with corporate partners, arts leaders, business support agencies, and subject matter experts to deliver development programmes that drive innovation and creativity, enabling arts practitioners and organisations to thrive in a rapidly changing environment, ensuring their long-term sustainability and success.

We will promote a diversity of perspectives, expertise exchange, and knowledge transfer between the sectors, and transdisciplinary collaboration with our educational institutions. We will explore the potential of arts and technology and support a transformative upskilling in data management and analysis to develop an evidence base for arts investment.

Business to Arts will be recognised as a trusted thought leader across the public, private and cultural sectors, and through action research, data analysis, and evidence-based practices, we will contribute to public and private sector policies that shape investment in the arts in Ireland.



We connect  
the corporate  
and cultural  
sectors through  
purposeful  
partnerships.

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### Our mission

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To encourage investment in the arts for the benefit of wider society.

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### Our vision

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An Ireland where business and the arts, working in partnership, inspire and shape the world around us.



Strategic Priority 1

# Stimulating Growth & Transformation





We will work to foster creativity in business and embed business practices in the arts to drive the ingenuity of our network.





## Intention

### Unlock potential

## Initiative

- We will develop new arts innovation programmes with a focus on building new capabilities and income diversification to help arts organisations move from over-reliance on public subsidies, and increase their flexibility and resilience.
- We will drive a transformational upskilling of arts rights holders in data to attract high-value sponsorship, improve audience engagement, and measure impact. We will develop and deliver these programmes in partnership with corporates, business support agencies, and subject matter experts.
- We will build our understanding of the evolving potential of the intersection of art and technology to develop new forms of creativity and expression, business models, and commercial opportunities for both sectors.
- We will champion the role of creative and cultural producers as a dynamic resource to bridge the gap between culture and commerce. By employing artists and creative practitioners on client projects, we can bring innovative thinking and diverse perspectives to the heart of business needs and provide valuable experience and funding for those artists to invest back into their practice.

## Impact

- As a result of our arts innovation programmes, there is a distinct increase in the ratio of self-generated income from diversified revenue streams.
- Innovation in the arts sector is recognised via our Arts Innovator Award at our annual Business to Arts Awards.
- Corporate case studies demonstrate the tangible benefits of collaborating with artists and incorporating arts into business.
- Creative and cultural producers have viable career opportunities in the corporate world, and bring valuable insights, skills and investment back into the arts sector.



## Intention

Broaden and deepen the financial ecosystem available to the arts sector in Ireland

## Initiative

- We will increase the visibility of arts partnership opportunities and develop our brokering service. We will work to identify and introduce prospective business and arts partners with aligned values, to assist in the design of new partnerships to meet business objectives and societal impact, and in the valuation and negotiation of a fair price for all.
- We will harness expertise from our corporate membership and beyond to investigate alternative private investment mechanisms and cultural finance opportunities, such as debt financing, venture philanthropy, social impact investing, and match funding to support the capital development and critical capacity-building projects of arts organisations and cultural institutions in Ireland.
- We will build on our track record of large-scale donor-advised arts funds in response to sectoral needs for sustainable and inclusive growth, working closely with public, private and third sector interests to explore the establishment of an arts endowment fund to mitigate against the arts sector’s vulnerability in the face of major economic challenges.
- We will advocate for increased patronage of the arts and opportunities for individual artists by continuing our long history of facilitating artist commissions and seeking new partners for transformative artist bursaries. We will encourage businesses to differentiate themselves by supporting emerging artforms and playing a formative role in the development of exciting new artistic practice and audiences.

## Impact

- The number and value of corporate-cultural partnerships and patronage influenced or brokered by Business to Arts increases year on year and overall there is a significant increase in private sector investment in the arts in Ireland.
- There is a greater synergy between the public and private sector through ambitious new cross-sectoral initiatives that benefit the arts and culture sector and ensure positive societal impact for generations to come.
- Emerging artforms find equal parts public and private support, increasing opportunities for artists and improving audience experiences.
- A new annual Business to Arts Award for Arts Trustee of the Year highlights the exceptional contributions of individuals to the patronage, governance and leadership of arts organisations.



Strategic Priority 2

# Catalysing Purposeful Partnerships





We will create the conditions for a dynamic synergy between the arts and business sectors to deliver value for society.



## Intention

# Foster responsible and sustainable development

## Initiative

- We will build our own intercultural competency and in doing so, encourage authentic diversity, equity and inclusion across all of our cross-sectoral initiatives, seeking out partnerships that can broaden access and engage across lines of difference.
- We will incorporate sustainability principles into our work, and will advocate for minimising environmental impact with our stakeholders and suppliers as a responsible business. We will champion the powerful role the arts can play in promoting sustainability, highlighting new thinking and sharing best practice.
- We will collaborate with third level and other educational institutions and contribute to new transdisciplinary programmes that bridge business and arts, including programmes relevant to society and arts capacity building in Ireland.
- We will be an honest broker working closely with those who shape our cities to create the conditions for shared success of cultural tenancy models, providing more sustainable community arts and culture spaces across the land.
- We will build new networks and new champions within the Irish business community nationwide. We will seek to diversify our corporate membership and become more inclusive of small-medium enterprises nationally, identifying and incentivising regional advocates and investment for the arts and for our work.

## Impact

- Private investment in the arts harnesses the power of creativity for positive social change—particularly in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion and sustainability—with at least five step-change purposeful partnerships initiated and facilitated by Business to Arts.
- Business to Arts plays a formative role in the development of new transdisciplinary programmes in third-level education.
- We facilitate multiple cultural tenancy agreements in new developments, increasing sustainable and secure workplaces for artists and embedding arts in everyday lives of those in the community.
- There is a steady increase in dynamic partnerships between regional businesses and regional arts organisations and artists, making ambitious arts activity accessible and achievable throughout the country, recognised regularly via our Business to Arts Awards.





‘Art is the highest form of hope.  
It has the power to uplift,  
inspire, and challenge us to  
envision a better and more  
compassionate world.’


Ai Weiwei



Strategic Priority 3

# Scaffolding our Strategy





We will underpin our external strategic priorities with critical infrastructure and resources.





## Intention

Secure our own organisation's future

## Initiative

- We will reinforce our relevance for our stakeholders and distinguish ourselves from competitors by harnessing our unique positioning at the intersection of culture and commerce, our authentic arts understanding and our interdisciplinary skill sets. We will generate a range of opportunities for knowledge and expertise exchange between our members, instigating mutually beneficial programmes.
- We will develop and consolidate our evidence base for the value of business supporting the arts through action research and data. We will collaborate with public, private and non-profit sector partners, including our colleagues in Northern Ireland, to improve our understanding of the evolving landscape for arts investment.
- We will increase investment in Business to Arts from public, private, and philanthropic sources to secure our business operations and increase our impact. We will advocate for joint funding for our strategic projects from both Government departments that represent our members' interests. We will launch a giving circle of visionary individuals at home and abroad who can help to accelerate this strategy.
- We will model the behaviour we espouse in responsible business, consistently seeking to improve our knowledge and demonstrate best practice in environmental, social and governance standards.

## Impact

- Business to Arts is a CEO and CMO's first port of call as a crucial cultural partner that can unlock value through creative and arts partnerships. Our stakeholders view us as a trusted thought leader, and we are invited to contribute to policy matters relating to private investment in the arts in Ireland.
- Our internal R&D lab is established to develop our sectoral intelligence and data science capability, test new ideas, pilot our arts innovation programmes, and to capture our action research, which is routinely cited.
- As an anchor cultural tenant in a high profile location, we have secured our own operational infrastructure, and attract the best talent, showcase trailblazing arts partnerships, provide a social space for corporate-cultural engagement, as well as a venue for in-person arts sector training and development.





This strategy was developed following a year of discussions with member leadership, a comprehensive membership survey, a stakeholder consultation, and multiple team and board workshops. Thanks to everyone for their contributions and care.

June 2023

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## Board

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Davina Saint (Chair)  
Fiona Clark  
Myles Clarke  
Fiona D'Arcy  
James Hanley  
Jeanne Kelly  
Tony Lawless  
Simone Macleod-Nairn  
Teresa McColgan  
Robert McEvoy  
Gerard McNaughton  
Etain Seymour  
Oliver Wall

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## Team

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**Louise O'Reilly**  
Chief Executive

**Emily Carson**  
Head of Communications  
and Partnerships

**Michelle Reid**  
Arts Portfolio Manager

**Rachel Assaf**  
Curatorial Projects Manager

**Mella Cahill**  
Membership and  
Projects Manager



Business to Arts  
Lower Ground Floor  
17 Kildare St.  
Dublin 2  
D02 CY90

CHY 9871  
Comp No. 134968  
RCN: 20024741

[info@businessstoarts.ie](mailto:info@businessstoarts.ie)  
[www.businessstoarts.ie](http://www.businessstoarts.ie)  
[socials@businessstoarts.ie](mailto:socials@businessstoarts.ie)

