

Saibhreas an tSaoil

Mayo County Council Strategic Arts Plan 2003-2006



Mayo County Council

Strategic Arts Plan

2003-2006



Contents

	<i>page</i>
Introduction	..... 2
Scope	..... 2
Stakeholders	..... 2
Context	..... 2
Mission	..... 3
Approach	..... 3
Guiding Principles and Values	..... 3
Strategic Aims	..... 5
Strategic Framework	..... 6
Objectives and actions	..... 7
Implementation	..... 13
Role of the Arts Service	..... 13
Structures	..... 14
Resources	..... 15
Monitoring & Evaluation	..... 16

Arts Office
Mayo County Council
Áras an Chontae
Castlebar
Co. Mayo
tel: 094 24444
fax: 094 28188
email: artsstaf@mayococo.ie
web: www.mayococo.ie

Strategic Arts Plan 2003-2006

Introduction

Mayo County Council Strategic Arts Plan, 2003-2006, has been developed to provide a documented framework for actions which strategically direct public funding for the arts in Mayo. Driven by the Arts Service of Mayo County Council, the generation of the Arts Plan has resulted from a wide consultative exercise which:

- examined past and current achievements in the development of the arts in Mayo,
- determined current and projected needs of the local arts sector,
- informed the appropriate responses to those needs.

The Strategic Arts Plan is intended to support the progressive development of the arts in Mayo, and to benefit the many stakeholders whose interests lie within, overlap and complement those of the vibrant arts community in Mayo.

Scope

The Strategic Arts Plan for Mayo is concerned with the application of available human, physical and financial resources in support of the arts in Mayo, in the best interest of the public in Mayo. In particular, the Strategic Arts Plan is designed to direct Mayo County Council's support for the arts during the years 2003 to 2006, as a first phase of implementation within the ten-year strategic timeframes of Mayo County Council's Corporate Plan and the Mayo County Development Strategy.

Stakeholders

The 'stakeholders' for the development of the arts in Mayo include:

- artists
- arts workers and activists
- arts organisations and groups (professional and amateur)
- arts centres, venues and facilities
- audiences for different art forms and practices
- community groups
- the public
- public representatives
- Mayo County Council
- Mayo County Development Board
- The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- other public service providers in Mayo, including Údaras na Gaeltachta, FÁS, County Mayo VEC, Mayo Education Centre, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Western Health Board and Community Development Projects.
- business and industry in Mayo.

Context

The Mayo County Development Strategy generated by Mayo County Development Board identifies *the need to improve access to and participation in cultural activity in Mayo* as a challenge to be addressed in the coming years, and sets an *objective to develop the Region's cultural infrastructure and improve linkages between existing Centres building on the West Region's strong cultural traditions*.

In particular, the County Development Strategy adopts as one of its strategic themes *A Thriving Culture*, noting as the context for this theme that: *Mayo has a rich tapestry of cultural characteristics that contribute to the County's high quality of life*.

There is a need to further improve the cultural infrastructure in all its forms and to promote access to and participation in all forms of cultural activity, while valuing our cultural diversities. It sets out the goal That the cultures of all the people of Mayo will be recognised, valued and supported to enhance the local high quality of life, with the specific underlying objectives 1) To ensure that Mayo's culture, in all its forms, achieves the maximum creative, social and economic return, and 2) To promote inter-culturalism.

In pursuit of these objectives, the Implementation Plan for the first 3 years of the 10-year County Development Strategy requires as one short-term output the generation of a County Arts Plan. The 10-year County Development Strategy therefore provides the framework for the Strategic Arts Plan, which details actions to be implemented in the short term in pursuit of specific objectives related to arts and culture.

The Strategic Arts Plan is also aligned with the overall objectives the Arts Plan 2003-2006 of the Arts Council. Specifically, the Mayo Strategic Arts Plan acts at local level to support the following objectives in particular:

- Broaden and enrich participation in the arts.
- Broaden and enhance audiences for the arts.
- Work with others to bring the arts closer to local communities.

It also supports the other overall objectives of the Arts Plan, namely:

- Make an arts career a realistic ambition for excellent and innovative artists.
- Raise standards in arts leadership and management.
- Extend the international impact and success of Irish arts and artists.

Mission

The Mayo County Council Strategic Arts Plan is underpinned by the mission statement of Mayo County Council, stated in Corporate Plan 2001-2005 Facing the Future Together:

“Mayo County Council’s mission is to improve the quality of life of people living in Mayo and increase the attractiveness of Mayo as a place in which to live, work and invest.”

Specifically, the Strategic Arts Plan frames the means of achieving Mayo County Council’s corporate objective to *Promote an appreciation of and involvement in the arts and make the arts more accessible to everyone in County Mayo.*

Approach

The planning approach adopted within the Arts Service is developmental in nature. It concentrates on actions that can lead to incremental growth within the arts sector and its contribution to the overall, integrated development of County Mayo.

The Strategic Arts Plan is not devoted solely to actions that are new. There is a very extensive level of service provision in support of arts development already in existence, provided by the Arts Service of Mayo County Council. Consultations with the arts community highlighted many of the strengths of the arts in Mayo, for example in community arts, that result from existing supports, as well as weaknesses and needs to be addressed in the coming years. The Arts Plan therefore sets out an overall framework within which a mix of actions is included, comprising:

- **the continued provision of a number of current services;**
- **the modification of certain services;**
- **and the instigation of a number of new initiatives.**

Guiding principles and values

The approach to the delivery of the arts service is guided by certain principles and values which are useful in establishing where supports are best directed and how services are best structured.

Values

The values to be applied in the implementation of the Strategic Arts Plan, responsibility for which will rest with the Arts Service of Mayo County Council, are those espoused in Mayo County Council's Corporate Plan 2001-2005 Facing the Future Together.

- That the Council provides an appropriate and responsive service to our people and the local communities they inhabit in a spirit of partnership and mutual understanding.
- That all activities of the Council must be seen to be carried out with integrity, fairness, impartiality, transparency and efficiency.
- That our activities promote social inclusion and mitigate against social disadvantage.
- That we promote the sustainable development of our county while aiming to halt rural decline and facilitate the repopulation of our countryside.
- That we are committed to securing our mission and goals by communication with and the involvement of our staff and customer base.

Guiding principles

Quality

In line with the mission statement of Mayo County Council, the Arts Service will deliver a high quality service for public benefit.

Inclusion

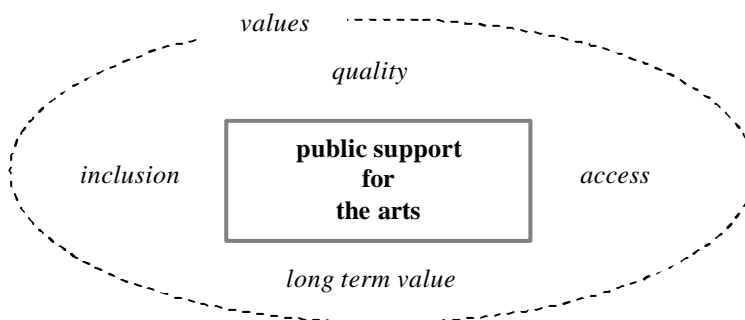
The Arts Service respects the creativity of individuals and the community throughout Mayo and operates in an inclusive manner.

Access

Support is targeted at arts activities, events and initiatives that increase access and participation in the arts.

Long term value

The Arts Service employs a developmental approach to the growth of the arts sector, focusing on sustainability, while supporting artistic quality and best practice.



Strategic Aims

Public support for the arts in Mayo has three strategic aims, which drive specific developmental objectives and actions to be pursued in order to achieve them.

STRATEGIC AIM 1

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

The strategic programming, development and support of arts events and initiatives, ensuring the broadest possible coverage of the county, will be the primary means for fostering public awareness and appreciation of the arts in Mayo. Public interaction will also be enhanced through the provision of regular, relevant information on local arts activities, and the provision of complementary documentation that conveys the origin, intent, content and context of specific projects or initiatives.

STRATEGIC AIM 2

Promote access and participation in the arts throughout Mayo.

The Arts Service is non-elitist in ethos and aims to ensure the broadest access possible to the arts, guided by the principle of social inclusion as embraced by Mayo County Council. It seeks to enable people of diverse backgrounds and circumstances to engage with the arts. The Arts Service will continue to provide and further develop opportunities for participation and self-expression through the arts.

STRATEGIC AIM 3

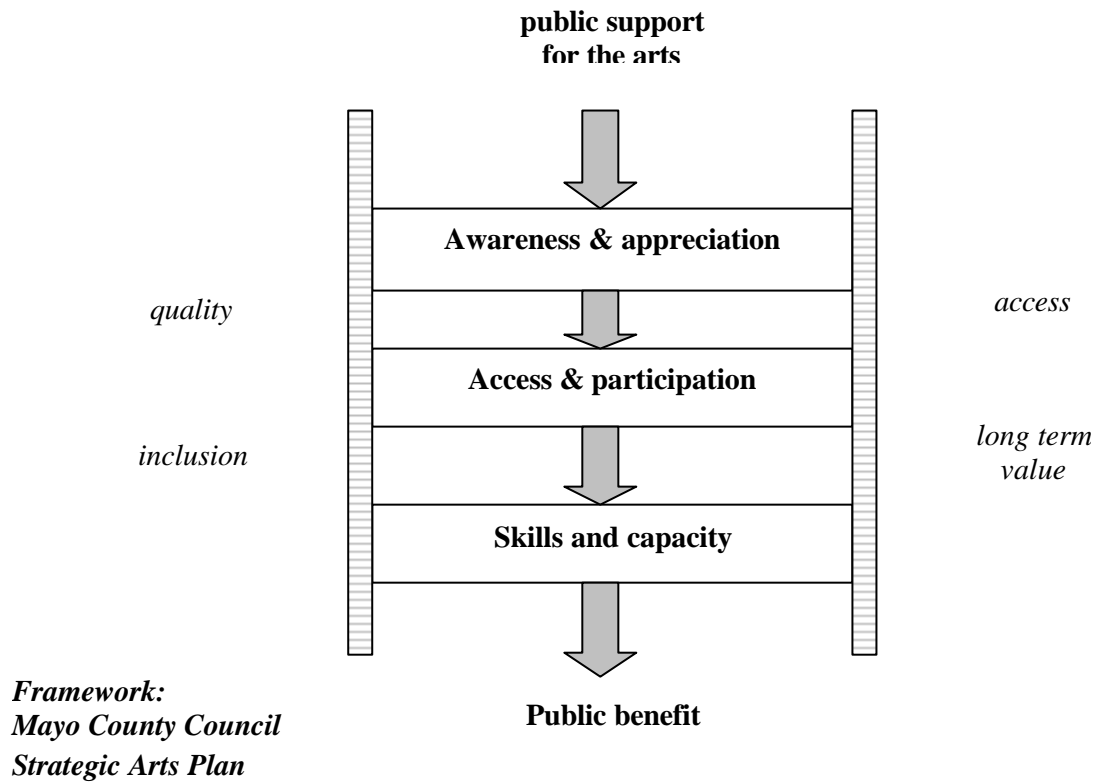
Enhance the skills and capacity of the local arts sector.

The Arts Service will support the development of the skills and capability (artistic and operational) of artists, arts groups and arts organisations in order to achieve and sustain high standards of practice. The Arts Service will also support the provision of appropriate and adequate places and spaces for artists and audiences in Mayo in which art may be created, exhibited and performed.

Strategic Framework

The mission, values, principles and strategic aims together form a strategic framework within which objectives and actions can be set out that, taken together, act to reinforce and complement one another in a concerted manner, in pursuit of the overriding mission.

The strategic framework of the Arts Plan is illustrated in the following figure.



The objectives and actions that are incorporated within the three aims of this strategic framework are detailed below.

Objectives and Actions

STRATEGIC AIM 1

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

The strategic programming, development and support of arts events and initiatives, ensuring the broadest possible coverage of the county, will be the primary means for fostering public awareness and appreciation of the arts in Mayo. Public interaction will also be enhanced through the provision of regular, relevant information on local arts activities, and the provision of complementary documentation that conveys the origin, intent, content and context of specific projects or initiatives.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide a comprehensive arts information service.
- Programme arts events and initiatives to maximise exposure to the broadest possible range of arts practice for public audiences.
- Present art in a variety of accessible settings and places to maximise public interaction, through strategic programming and through the public art programme.
- Generate appropriate documentation and publications to complement arts projects and activities, in order to enhance public appreciation and to create a growing public record of practices and processes.

ACTIONS

Continuing Actions:

1. Expand the Arts Service website, adding the Arts Plan, guidelines and submissions on grants and awards, news, notices and publications.
2. Continue to provide information on events and activities through extensive mailings, press/media announcements, and other channels.
3. Continuously update and expand the database of contact names within the arts community in Mayo created by the Arts Service.
4. Continue to programme exhibitions and performances to engage the public, which includes the exploration of new venues, spaces and art forms.
5. Continue to augment the Mayo County Council Collection with new works, and to present works from the Collection in a variety of publicly accessible spaces.
6. Develop the range of publications and records generated by the Arts Service, alone or in collaboration with other organisations, following the examples and standards set by, among others, the 'Creative Reverie' publication (Sacred Heart Hospital – Artist-in-Residence) and the cataloguing of the Mayo County Council Collection.

New Actions:

7. Develop a profile of the Arts Service and the range of services it provides for public circulation.
8. Publish the County Mayo Arts Plan.
9. Publish an explanatory booklet describing Arts Grants and Awards to include nature of the supports available, application procedures, criteria for awards, dates for submission, and contact details for queries and further information.

Beidh siad seo foilsithe as Gaeilge.

10. Develop an appropriate mechanism to disseminate arts information to the public on a county-wide basis.
11. Generate and disseminate information on public art projects.
12. Develop links to enhance artistic and cultural exchange internationally.
13. Expand access to the Mayo County Council Collection throughout the county, including Area Offices and other suitable sites.
14. Investigate interactive models of exploration to address architectural awareness in a variety of contexts.

STRATEGIC AIM 2

Promote access and participation in the arts throughout Mayo.

The Arts Service is non-elitist in ethos and aims to ensure the broadest access possible to the arts, guided by the principle of social inclusion as embraced by Mayo County Council. It seeks to enable people of diverse backgrounds and circumstances to engage with the arts. The Arts Service will continue to provide and further develop opportunities for participation and self-expression through the arts.

OBJECTIVES

- Raise the level of access and engagement with the arts for children and young people.
- Provide support for individuals and groups engaged in arts activities.
- Develop and enhance partnerships with other agencies and organisations in Mayo to broaden engagement with the arts.
- Programme arts activities and events in a strategic and developmental manner throughout the county.
- Support the strategic development of community-based arts.
- Enhance local participation and long-term benefit of arts festivals and events.
- Support the provision of facilities to enhance access and participation in the arts.

ACTIONS

Continuing Actions:

1. Continue to support individuals and groups engaged in arts activities through funding awards under the Arts Act Grants.
2. Continue to target strategic support for arts initiatives and events through the Ealaíon trí Ghaeilge programme and to provide an arts service in Irish where requested.
3. Continue to provide support for Mayo Artsquad, in partnership with FÁS, to further expand the pool of skilled community arts workers and community-based arts activities in the county.
4. Continue to enhance access by engaging arts workers to facilitate community-based arts initiatives and workshops.
5. Continue to collaborate with the Library Service in order to enhance public engagement with the arts.
6. Continue to develop and deliver relevant annual events and festivals, like Force 12 Writers Weekend in Belmullet, Bealtaine for senior citizens throughout the county, and the Summer Music Series programmed in different locations, in order

to enhance participation and to further develop audiences.

7. Continue to expand supports for festivals that will have a developmental impact in order to deepen the level of local participation.
8. Continue to provide advisory support for the organisation of cultural festivals and events, including the provision of facilitated planning sessions.
9. Continue to develop Mayo Youth Theatre by allocating resources to enable it to reach more young people and to consolidate its administration and operation.
10. Continue to provide support for programming and audience development, through the Music Recital Scheme and guarantees against loss for touring theatre, among other means.
11. Continue to programme touring theatre / arts in educational contexts.
12. Continue to develop the provision for the arts in schools in order to support the integration of the arts into mainstream education, through advice on artist/art worker/facilitator recruitment, and on space and materials requirements.
13. Continue to provide workshops for teachers at both primary and secondary levels, in partnership with organisations such as Mayo Education Centre.
14. Continue to direct a portion of funding at innovative projects in order to test, experiment and explore modes and processes for engaging specific audiences with the arts.
15. Continue to develop and support quality arts initiatives in health care settings.

New Actions:

16. Initiate a community-based Youth Music project, modelled on similar lines to Mayo Youth Theatre, to encourage and facilitate young people to develop creativity through music.
17. Investigate the use of non-dedicated buildings – schools, community centres, etc. – to support arts activities at a local level, making use of the findings and recommendations of the Auditoria and Exhibita reports of The Arts Council.
18. Develop and expand access to cultural cinema and film resources, and extend engagement with film by young people.
19. Extend access to dance practice and performance and provide for increased participation in dance training.
20. Examine possible approaches to improving the provision of education and training in music in Mayo (taking into account the outcomes of national research conducted by Music Network).
21. Expand the Arts Advisory Service to provide guidelines and advice on the integration of arts practice into other service areas e.g. healthcare, education.

STRATEGIC AIM 3

Enhance the skills and capacity of the local arts sector.

The Arts Service will support the development of the skills and capability (artistic and operational) of artists, arts groups and arts organisations in order to achieve and sustain high standards of practice. The Arts Service will also support the provision of spaces for artists and audiences, in which art may be created, exhibited and performed, taking into consideration the geographic profile of the county.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide opportunities for individual artists.
- Support skills development and training for artists, arts workers, and arts organisations.
- Develop and enhance partnerships with arts organisations and other agencies in the county in a strategic fashion, in line with the principles, aims and objectives of Mayo County Council.
- Work to enhance the available infrastructure in Mayo for all levels of arts activities – creation, exhibition and performance.
- Work to ensure the provision of at least one arts space in each electoral area of the county by 2006, within the context of the local spatial strategy and the County Development Strategy.
- Develop further the commissioning and community engagement processes for public art.

ACTIONS

Continuing Actions:

1. Continue to provide support through awards and bursaries to support emerging artistic talent through Tyrone Guthrie Awards, Amateur Drama Awards, Visual Arts Awards, and Music Recording Assistance Grants.
2. Continue to develop and deliver training and skills workshops for artists and arts workers.
3. Continue to provide support to the major arts organisations in the county - Linenhall Arts Centre, Custom House Studios, Heinrich Boll Cottage, Ballinglen Arts Foundation, Ballina Arts Events, Yew Tree Theatre Company and others – under partnership agreements guided by the aims of Mayo County Council Strategic Arts Plan.

4. Continue to provide support for the planned development of new art spaces arising from identified need and within the context of the local spatial strategy.
5. Continue to provide developmental supports to stimulate and enhance contemporary art practice.
6. Continue to work in partnership with The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon to support the development of the local arts sector.

New Actions:

7. Develop artists' residencies to increase opportunities for the creation of new work.
8. Establish an internal working group within Mayo County Council to clarify public art policy for adoption by the Council. The brief for the group would include:
 - commissioning practices and procedures
 - development of site selection and site/brief specification
 - examination of national and international best practice
 - clarification of the information and mediation process
 - exploration of the use of different art forms and practices
 - pilot / demonstration projects.
9. Appoint a Public Art Coordinator (part-time) to realise the goals and policy of the Internal working group .
10. Provide opportunities for enhanced networking within the arts community in order to support learning and the exploration of multi-disciplinary activities.

Implementation

Role of the Arts Service of Mayo County Council

The Arts Service of Mayo County Council is responsible for public services that deliver support for the arts in Mayo. The Arts Service is the principal agent for implementation of the Arts Plan.

The Arts Service is a well-established unit within the local authority's operating structure. The duration of the service – over 12 years - and the level of professional expertise contained within the department have resulted in the accumulation of a very substantial and valuable body of knowledge and experience within the local authority regarding the approaches to delivery and the benefits of public support for the arts.

This experience encompasses:-

- a wide variety of arts programming practices
- community arts initiatives
- the initiation and organisation of arts festivals and events
- developmental initiatives
- support for artists and arts organisations
- artform promotion and development
- the commissioning of public art
- collaboration with other public service providers – educational, healthcare, etc. – on initiatives in the arts
- the development and support of facilities for the arts.

This knowledge and experience represents a considerable, cultural resource that is effectively under continuous, strategic development by the professionals within the Arts Service, and informs the delivery of a public service for maximum effectiveness.

In the same manner as other functions within the local authority act in the public interest to promote and safeguard standards of practice in particular areas, the Arts Service of the County Council promotes and maintains the beneficial value of arts activities and projects in the public domain. This role is fulfilled by the professionals who staff the Arts Service. It needs to be clearly understood and communicated as one of the principal underlying rationales in the delivery of the public arts service.

The role of the Arts Service therefore encompasses the following functions:

- ensure that the value of arts activities in the public domain (and in the public interest) is of the highest possible standard
- inform and advise the arts sector and the public
- make connections between artists and audiences
- ensure that the arts are accessible to the community at large, and that arts activities are inclusive and open to the wider community
- influence and encourage the integration of arts activities into other areas of public service
- act to develop the base – quality and geographical spread – of arts activities
- policy development, planning and management for the arts.

The Arts Service delivers within the framework described above: it acts to ensure the quality of arts activities, promotes access and inclusion on behalf of the public, strives for best practice, and adopts a developmental approach (a long-term perspective) to the provision of support.

The role of the Arts Service itself needs to be regularly and widely communicated as a matter of course through the various information and advisory channels that are available.

Strategic Arts Programming

Strategic Arts programming is one of the mechanisms employed to raise and maintain awareness of the arts, increase appreciation of the value of the arts, and broaden access to and participation in the arts.

The strategic programming carried out by the Arts Service is intended to:

- initiate awareness and appreciation for the art practices
- develop and expand audiences for the arts, in varying artforms, throughout Mayo, and for different sections of the community
- fill gaps in arts programming provision
- challenge the public through a broad variety of arts practices/forms in readily accessible spaces
- broaden education regarding arts practices and forms.

Through strategic programming the Arts Service aims to enhance the overall level and reach of the arts in terms of geography, target audience and art form.

Independent Arts Organisations

The independent arts organisations in Mayo – the Linenhall Arts Centre, Yew Tree Theatre Company, Ballinglen Arts Foundation, Custom House Studios, Heinrich Boll Cottage among others - provide a varied, ongoing, quality programme of exhibitions and performances in the visual and performing arts. These organisations, particularly those supported by Mayo County Council under partnership agreements, provide powerful channels through which artists and audiences are connected. Mayo County Council Arts Service is cognisant of the arts provision by these organisations and plans initiatives in order to address gaps and extend existing provision.

These organisations, especially those in receipt of Arts Council support as professional arts organisations, also have a significant influence on, and provide a supporting role for, the emergence of new arts groups, organisations and events.

Structures

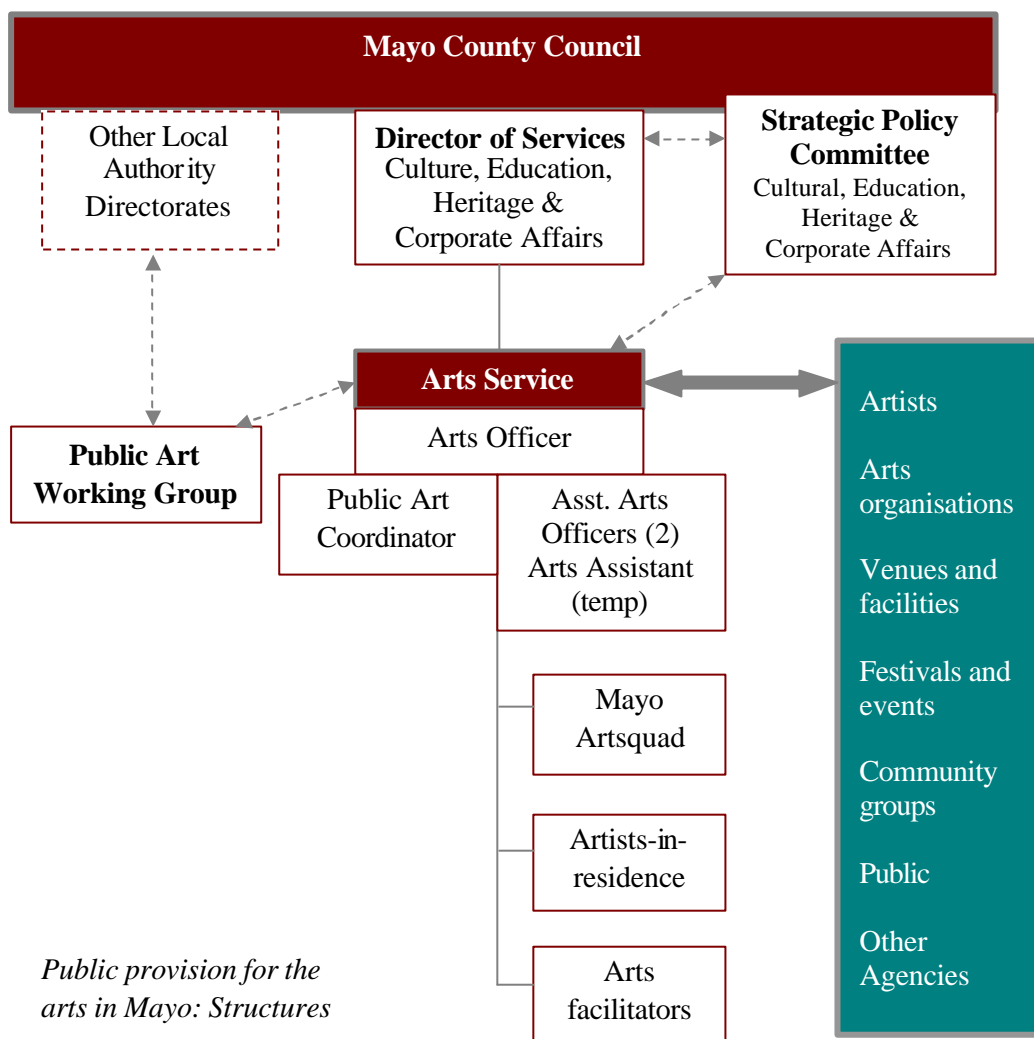
There are well-established structures to direct services in the arts within Mayo that have been evolving since the appointment of the first Arts Officer in 1989.

More recent changes include the establishment of Strategic Policy Committees to provide guidance for specific areas within the local authority's responsibilities, including the Arts Service, which falls within the remit of the Strategic Policy Committee for Culture and Corporate Affairs.

The Arts Service, in addition to its directly employed complement of staff (Arts Officer and assistant Arts Officers) also engages, on short-term contracts, artists, arts facilitators and arts workers for specific projects. Mayo Art Squad, a FÁS Community Employment Programme, is also operated through Mayo Council.

Mayo County Council Strategic Arts Plan will be implemented largely through these existing structures, with a few recommended changes or modifications.

The diagram below illustrates the structures for delivery of public supports for the arts in Mayo.



Resources

The Arts Plan for the years 2003-2006 represents the first phase within a ten-year strategy for overall county development, as documented in Mayo County Council's Corporate Plan and the Mayo County Development Strategy. The Arts Plan specifically directs actions in the short-term for implementation in support of the arts, within the context of this ten-year strategic timeframe.

Implementation of the Strategic Arts Plan 2003-2006 will be costed annually in order to ensure level of resources required for delivery (see next section).

Staffing of the Arts Service, as illustrated in Structures above, comprises the Arts Officer, two Assistant Arts Officers, and a temporary Arts Assistant. Mayo Artsquad is operated under a FÁS Community Employment Scheme. Artists-in-residence, and artists and facilitators for community arts and education and outreach activities, are employed as needed on short-term temporary contracts.

The Strategic Arts Plan does recommend the appointment of a part-time Public Arts Co-ordinator during the timeframe of the plan, following the establishment and early deliberations of an internal working group on Public Art. This is based upon the need for enhanced public interaction with commissioning projects, and is related to the extent of public expenditure, taken cumulatively, on public art in Mayo.

Funding

The provision for the arts is set out as a baseline expenditure below, to continue the current extent of programme and supports for the arts in Mayo.

ARTS SERVICE OPERATION

Staff & Associated Costs, Materials, Transport, insurance, Equipment, Office Costs, Publications, Documentation, Website, Research, Evaluation, Training, Arts Development, Consultancy

ARTS PROGRAMME & SUPPORTS

Arts Act Grants, Partnership Grants, Artists Residencies, Mayo Youth Theatre, Visual Arts, Touring Theatre, Film, Careers in Arts, Events, Targeted Programmes: Youth, Older Persons, Ealaíon tri Ghaeilge, Arts & Disability, Traveller's, Community Arts, Islands, Traditional Arts, Intercultural Arts, Arts & Health.

ARTISTS AWARDS, GRANTS & BURSARIES

Amateur Drama Awards, Tyrone Guthrie Awards, Materials Assistance, Exhibition Assistance, Music Recording, Music Recital Scheme, Guarantee Against Loss, Education Bursaries.

FESTIVALS

Bealtaine, Force 12, Summer Music Series.

Present level of funding	€464,724
Income (Arts Council, partnerships etc)	<u>€127,000</u>
Arts Service Costs 2002	€337,724

Within the objectives outlined in the Mayo Arts Plan, many required actions are either a continuation or modification of existing services and activities, which need to be maintained in support of the local arts sector. Central to the success of the plan are new, specified actions, which have resource implications.

The financial resources required for the Art Office to maintain the existing programme/ supports and to provide support for new actions within the timeframe of the Strategic Arts Plan (2003-2006) are set out below.

YEAR	2003	2004	2005	2006
ARTS SERVICE OPERATION (Including annual 5% increase)				
TOTAL COSTS TO MAINTAIN CURRENT PROVISION	503,868	529,761	556,249	584,061
DEVELOPMENTAL COSTS				
ARTS PROGRAMME & SUPPORTS				
New Actions: Arts Bulletin, Youth Arts, Public Lectures, Architecture, Dance, Film, Publications.	63,000	70,000	90,000	110,000
INCREASE TO PARTNERSHIP REVENUE FUNDING (Existing, Enhanced & New Venues)				
	13,000	27,000	35,000	40,000
TOTAL DEVELOPMENTAL COSTS	76,000	97,000	125,000	150,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE: PROVISION FOR THE ARTS	579,868	626,761	681,249	734,061
TOTAL INCOME (ARTS COUNCIL, PARTNERSHIPS ETC)	127,000	135,000	150,000	155,000
OUT-TURN	452,868	491,761	531,249	579,061

Expenditure on public art, derived from the Per Cent for Art Scheme, and from contributions from developers, private and community sources, is not included in these figures. The level of expenditure on public art varies from year to year, based upon the number and size of capital works, the pooling of smaller projects, the extent of private sector developments, and the time involved in commissioning and executing individual projects. Mayo County Council has been very proactive in applying funding available under the Per Cent for Art Scheme and this practice will continue in order to provide opportunities for artists to create new work, and for communities to engage with arts practice. Support for the post of Public Art Co-ordinator (part-time) is assumed to be derived from Per Cent for Art Scheme funding.

Allocated resources and funding will be reviewed annually and priorities established within the framework of identified strategic development, in order to maximise the success of this Strategic Arts Plan.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring

The principal mechanism for monitoring progress in implementing the actions of the Arts Plan is through the regular liaison and reporting between the Arts Service, the Director of Services for Culture, Education, Heritage and Corporate Affairs and the members of the Strategic Policy Committee for Culture and Corporate Affairs.

The annual process of preparation and adoption of budgets (Estimates) for the ensuing year detail the anticipated provision in respect of support for the arts. The Arts Service directs and records spending under the various measures with the arts allocation.

Quantitative measures in relation to supported arts activities are recorded and reported by the Arts Service. The number of exhibitions, festivals and events organised or supported, the number and circulation of information publications, the number and attendance of community arts workshops, training sessions and seminars are all logged. In addition, arts partnership organisations provide reports on their programmes and activities.

The level of activity resulting from different forms of support is therefore, in many cases, readily visible. The Annual Report of Mayo County Council includes a description of the nature and extent of arts activities supported each year, which is available for public scrutiny and information.

To assist the process of monitoring, the actions contained in the Arts Plan are deliberately specific and are designed to lend themselves, with relative ease to quantitative measurement. It is a straightforward matter to question whether actions have been started, continued, completed or planned to start.

However, in order to judge the true impact of supports for the arts, they need to be also evaluated qualitatively.

Evaluation

The difficulty in applying qualitative measures to evaluate the impact of supports for the arts is generally acknowledged. Measures are not yet well developed, commonly adopted or properly documented. Notwithstanding these difficulties, evaluation does take place.

In Mayo, the Arts Service is a professionally staffed department within the County Council. It embodies specialist expertise in planning and management of public support for the arts. Such professional expertise is applied as a matter of routine to assess the variety of quantitative and qualitative measures associated with particular initiatives and projects and to form an evaluation of their impact. While such evaluations are to an extent, qualitatively subjective, their value is nevertheless very considerable, given the breadth and depth of expertise and experience that is applied.

The reports by the arts partnership organisations of Mayo County Council - organisations that also embody extensive professional expertise in the arts - provide additional, highly qualified assessments of the impact of particular activities.

The Arts Service will also continue to draw upon the experiences of local authorities elsewhere in Ireland, the advice of The Arts Council, and the outcomes of a variety of studies that address the issue of evaluation of supports for the arts, both in Ireland and abroad.

Interim evaluation reports will be given annually to the Strategic Policy Committee and the Director of Service with responsibility for culture, during the operational timeframe of the Mayo Arts Plan. The objectives of these reports will be to:

1. state the progress to date regarding actions demanded by the Arts Plan;
2. assess both trends and developments in the arts in Mayo, and resource considerations, in order to deliver the remainder of the Arts Plan;
3. form a preparatory information base for input to the next Arts Plan.

In 2006, prior to the development of the next Arts Plan, a formal review will be conducted by the Arts Service.