



21<sup>st</sup> December 2021

**Stakeholder Submission**

# **Basic Income for the Arts**

The **Irish Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle Network** broadly welcomes this ground-breaking pilot initiative towards Basic Income for the Arts, and we thank the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media for inviting our sectors contributions and participation towards same.

Having been one of the verifying organisations involved in the 2019 iteration of the Professional Artists on Jobseekers allowance programme, we have some experience of the types of challenges that a scheme such as this can present.

We therefore would like to respond to some of your questions for consideration and to take this opportunity to outline some key points to bear in mind for the future design and roll out of same.

**Objectives:** *Page 3 - 4*

- We wholeheartedly agree with all the objectives as outlined. They are both clear and articulate.
- The two streams: one for developing artists and one for established artists are particularly important. This will encourage potential and latent talent to seek a career in the arts free from economic obstacles to same and will therefore grow the diversity of artists voices both visibly and laudably.
- Regarding the context objectives with a view to measurement of impact, it may be interesting to observe if the programme has affected living conditions and household security without prejudice.

**Eligibility:** *Page 5 - 9*

- In seeking to determine eligibility it is important that the two means of determining same as outlined are retained. That is:
  - i. Demonstration of membership by an approved certifying body or
  - ii. Self-certifying via the department directly with no prior requirement to be a member of any organisation/representative body
- We in ISACS must advise that we invite all applicants for the Jobseekers allowance programme to self-assess using the following inclusive rather than exclusive criteria. Membership of our network body alone does not suffice. Applicants currently seeking verification through ISACS must respond Yes and provide evidence of same to a minimum of three of the following six questions.
  - 1) Is your ISACS membership up to date?
  - 2) Are you recognised by your peers as a professional practicing artist?
  - 3) Have you received funding/ a grant from a local authority or a state organisation/body for your artistic work in the last 24 months?
  - 4) Have you performed/presented at a state supported arts festival/event/venue in the last 12 months and been re-numerated for same?
  - 5) Have you created three invoices over the past 12 months for your artistic practice – be that as artistic fees or commission or in an artistic outreach/educational capacity or as a speaker or other representative artistic role?
  - 6) Have you any academic/professional qualification/certification pertaining to your artistic practice?
- We therefore agree with the assertion that the appropriate mechanism may and **will** vary by artform

- As regards the definitions of artforms, it is worth noting that Street Arts and Spectacle are not identified directly via the Arts Act 2003 list, although they often interweave with other artforms and could therefore be construed under *'any creative or interpretative expression'*. However, they are recognised independently by the Arts Council of Ireland and indeed by us in the ISACS Network.
- The list therefore on Page 7 of Artforms, Professionals and Certifying Organisations could therefore be amended slightly. We suggest the following for our part:

Artform	Professionals	Certifying Organisations
Circus, Street Arts, Spectacle	Circus Artists	ISACS Network
	Street & Spectacle Artists	
	Directors	
	Puppet, Prop & Float makers	
	Costume designers	
	Creative fabricators	
	Clowns & Physical performers	
	Set designers	
	Sound designers	
	Lighting designers	
	Choreographers	
	Community/participatory artists	
	Other	

- As regards the most appropriate mechanism to provide evidence of eligibility, where an applicant is not a member of a recognised certifying organisation, in addition to our suggested questions above, we suggest adding the following. This is with a view particularly to encouraging emerging artists to apply:
  - Evidence of local arts engagement via Local Authority Arts Office or other community institutions such as local school, community centre, library, local arts group, educational setting etc. This could be in the form of a reference or letter of recommendation or images of artwork in a community/educational/environmental setting, either commissioned or independently undertaken.
- It is vital that the criteria for developing artists do not rely on evidence of funding, educational qualification or income earned as these are often things the emerging artist does not have yet. In particular, we would highlight this as a distinct challenge for street, circus and spectacle artists and arts workers, where there are no educational qualifications for some available in Ireland currently.

#### **Selection Process and Rate of Payment: Page 10**

- We believe that it is very important that this initial pilot study should be designed to ensure that artists from all sectors, art forms, social and economic backgrounds are included and represented in line with the stratification suggestion outlined. This will ensure that we will be able to measure the impact of the basic income on artists from diverse backgrounds and who work across different industries and to therefore identify if basic income can create a difference to our society in making arts an accessible career for the whole population of Ireland and not the few.
- Regarding the number of appropriate paid hours, we feel that this could be estimated at 30 hours per week for a minimum baseline starting point.

- There are two additional concerns that we have and which we hope do not ring true. They are that we hope that artists will not experience discrimination around their earned income in the form of negative negotiations with potential employers/contractors owing to the fact that they are in receipt of Basic Income. We also hope that this scheme will not breed resentment among artists who have not been fortunate enough to receive same. Communications around the purpose and aims of the scheme will therefore be critical to remove any negative repercussions which would affect artists, their worth and their confidence.

**Responsibilities of Participants and Data Collection: *Page 11 – 12***

- We agree that it will prove essential to gather effective and meaningful data over the period of this scheme, in order to demonstrate the worth and impact of same and provide evidence for its future development
- We therefore advise that it will be essential to communicate to all those who apply or who are considering applying to same that they are aware that they will be obligated to participate in and provide relevant data for the purposes of the study.
- We also agree with the suggestion that for comparative purposes similar data is gathered from those who are unsuccessful in their application for same. These participants however should then be given appropriate financial remuneration and a guarantee of inclusion in future schemes should they wish to participate in same.
- As mentioned above it will be important to note any changes in living conditions and household security in line with the receipt of Basic income or lack thereof.
- In terms of measuring the growth/ contribution /engagement of a participant within an art form/artforms it is important that the gathering of such data does not become like writing an annual grant application or become a competitive tool which then removes people from the urgent need for basic income because of a lack of evidence of productivity. We would ward against this type of measurement for something which is being given to guarantee a basic living standard and a value of the persons worth as an individual and a creative thinker and being in our society without measurement or means testing.
- As regards the frequency of collection of any relevant data, we feel once annually will suffice.

**In addition:**

We would encourage strong, clear and direct messaging to the wider public around the roll out of the artist's basic income scheme. This should include the message that we value and recognise the instinctive and intuitive contribution that artists make to society which often does not receive adequate financial recompense in line with basic costs of living or minimum wage standards.

Through this scheme Ireland will be placing a distinct value on artists role within our society and community, by providing a basic income to encourage artists and creativity to flourish in our country, ensuring that Ireland leads the way in celebrating its artistic talent, alongside our nations creative and cultural reputation. Through a scheme such as this Ireland will transform who can make and appreciate art breaking down previous precarious economic barriers and obstacles to a career in the Arts.

Funding the sustainability of artists careers in Ireland is part of a much broader nationwide push to give our wider citizenship and communities access to arts, to culture, to expression and to a unique voice for our country, our heritage and our presence on a world stage of independent thinkers, creatives and innovators.