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## Making great art work : literature policy & strategy 2018

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*Making Great Art Work:*

Literature Policy & Strategy 2018

## General Description and Context

The Arts Council's role in literature is to support the development of the artform, and it is a key player<sup>1</sup> in the provision of a national infrastructure for literary culture in Ireland. The Arts Council's remit for literature includes poetry, fiction, short fiction, children's literature, critical writing and some forms of creative non-fiction. Through direct support and through partnerships with others, the Arts Council works to create opportunities for people across the country to engage with writing from Ireland and around the world. As the international, commercial publishing industry benefits a number of established Irish writers, Arts Council support is concentrated on indigenous, independent literary publishing houses and journals that platform new voices, experimental work and distinctive Irish writers.

In [Making Great Art Work](#), the Arts Council identifies two policy priority areas: **the artist** and **public engagement**. In order to deliver on these priority areas in literature, the Council will take the following approach over the next three years.

## Literature Artists /Writers

The Arts Council supports individual writers to develop their practice directly through the **Literature Bursary Awards** and **Travel and Training Awards**. The Council supports a number of resource organisations that provide a range of services and opportunities for writers, from advice and mentoring to public events and teaching positions. Publishing – whether in book form, online or in journals – is critical to writers' career development, providing valuable editorial support and a platform for work, and the Council supports a range of indigenous publishers and journals through its funding programmes. The Council is also partner or lead organisation for a number of initiatives designed to honour an individual writer, champion a particular form of writing, and engage the public with high-quality literature. These include the Ireland Chair of Poetry, Laureate na nÓg and the Laureate for Irish Fiction.

Aosdána affords an important honour to writers with a distinguished body of work. Members of Aosdána may, under certain conditions, avail of the Cnuas, a stipend which is designed to enable them to devote their energies fully to their work.

Writers can avail of direct supports through the Arts Council's **Artists' Awards**, and **literature partnerships**. **Literature Bursary Awards** and **Travel and Training Awards** are designed to provide writers with opportunities to concentrate on creating work. Through its **literature partnerships**, the Arts Council works with a number of universities to provide writer residencies. These provide structured opportunities for more established writers, enriching the university environment while also providing time and space for the writers to develop their own practice. Through its **Strategic Funding**, the Arts Council supports the essential infrastructure required to sustain and develop a vibrant literature

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<sup>1</sup> Other key players include the library network; booksellers; the commercial publishing industry in Ireland and abroad (the UK in particular); third-level institutions, particularly those offering programmes in creative writing; the Department of Education and Science.

sector in Ireland and, together with [Arts Grant Funding](#), provides opportunities for writers to create new work and for audiences to engage with high-quality writing.

***In further supporting artists, over the next three years the Arts Council will:***

- Enhance existing supports for individual artists, offering additional opportunities for emerging and mid-career artists, including the reintroduction of multi-annual bursaries.
- Extend the number of writers' residencies to include new partners, at home and abroad.
- Through our funding agreements with key resource organisations, establish fair remuneration and contractual guidelines for writers, and develop mechanisms to monitor and ensure compliance.
- Through our funding agreements with key resource organisations, work to develop information, research and developmental programmes that will inform future supports for writers.

## Public Engagement & Literature

In the area of public engagement, the Arts Council's concern is in providing the public with opportunities to read, listen to and engage with literary writing. While the country's library network and the commercial bookselling industry provide opportunities for readers to borrow, buy and read literature, the Arts Council's interest is in platforming voices that are new, risky or experimental, and ensures this through support for indigenous literary publishers (through [Strategic](#) and [Arts Grant Funding](#)).

Council is also concerned with providing opportunities for the public to engage with authors more directly, and supports a range of literary festivals and events to this end (through [Strategic Funding](#), [Arts Grant Funding](#) and [Festivals Investment Scheme](#)). While live author events and literary festivals offer valuable opportunities for the public, a deficit exists in relation to the Arts Council's policies and strategies around readership.

***In further developing public engagement, over the next three years the Arts Council will:***

- Strengthen support for literary publishing in Ireland in a way that ensures the sustainability of this critical and evolving industry.
- Build the Arts Council's knowledge in relation to audiences for literature in order to inform future policy.
- Develop a policy and strategy for developing and increasing readership, in partnership with libraries, booksellers and others. Within this, ensure that the broader strategy:
  - Responds to Ireland's changing demographic profile.
  - Attends to the specific needs of children and young people.
- Building on the success and proliferation of literary festivals, strengthen venues' capacities in literary programming.

## Specific Literature Development Areas

A range of other issues of particular strategic relevance to literature have an impact on the wider ecology for writers, literary audiences and readers.

### **Irish-language literature**

The Arts Council is one of a small number of agencies with a role in supporting the development of Irish-language literature. This vulnerable sector faces a significant number of challenges, including audience development, readership, translation, partnerships, promotion and critical writing.

#### ***To address this, over the next three years the Arts Council will:***

- Work with relevant partners to clarify roles and responsibilities, and develop unique supports to address the needs of Irish-language literature.

### **Publishing**

During the past ten years the backdrop for publishing has changed dramatically: pricing and buying policies, falling sales, global competition, and the rapid rise of digital platforms (selling, distribution, printing, marketing) have all changed the environment in which indigenous literary publishers are operating.

Despite these global and local pressures, the publishing industry in Ireland is dynamic and active, and, given the recent rise in interest in Irish writing and the proliferation of literary awards, there remain opportunities for Irish publishers to develop and increase their standing nationally and internationally. Equally, a number of diverse platforms – journals, pamphlets, new media – offer outlets for writers at various stages of their careers, and provide readers with an engaging mix of new and diverse writing. Given the increasingly risk-averse nature of commercial publishing, these platforms are invaluable for the health of the artform.

The Arts Council's support against this backdrop of change has remained relatively unchanged, and it is timely for the Council to examine and refresh the way in which it supports this vital and evolving creative industry.

#### ***Given this, over the next three years the Arts Council will:***

- Undertake a comprehensive review and develop a specific strategy for the Arts Council's support for publishing in Ireland, working to consolidate recent publishing successes, and establish Ireland as a centre for excellence in independent literary publishing.

## Other *MGAW* Areas of Strategic Interest for Literature

#### ***In the area of International, over the next three years the Arts Council will:***

- Continue to develop the international dimensions of both the Laureate for Irish Fiction and Laureate na nÓg.
- Stimulate support for translation and wider dissemination of Irish literary writing.
- Broaden and promote the travel and training opportunities for literature professionals.
- Broaden and promote international residency programmes for writers at all stages of their careers.