



YOUNG *at* ART

A Strategy for 2015 – 2018

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Introduction

Young at Art is Northern Ireland's leading children's arts provider. Established in 1998 as the creator of the region's first international arts festival for children and young people, it has grown both the festival (the **Belfast Children's Festival**) and its year-round programme to significant levels of both access and quality. The organisation now reaches **30,000 - 50,000 children and adults each year**, delivering performances, workshops, exhibitions and special projects, all tailored to their needs. It is recognised as ambitious, sensitive and closely connected to both artists and the society in which it works. It is internationally focused and multi-artform with a long history of positive collaborations with other sectors and organisations. Its work ranges from high quality international contemporary performances to specialist long term projects such as engaging with early years groups in areas of high deprivation; supporting emerging individual artists to develop their own work, and co-producing large-scale internationally ambitious events such as the largest outdoor arts event staged in Northern Ireland, **Land of Giants** or hosting Jeremy Deller's **Sacrilege** (bouncy Stonehenge) in a public park.

Despite this success, reach and the evident demand and potential for growth, the company is also facing very real challenges, largely related to resources and paying for its future work. The Global Economic Recession has had a negative impact on public funding and policy in all the areas where Young at Art contributes (arts, education, youth, community, social development, tourism, creative industries and regeneration). It has damaged families and households with women and children most affected by loss of earnings, poverty and loss of public services. Northern Ireland is lagging significantly behind the rest of the UK, with wage levels dropping by 10% in the last five years and unemployment doubling, both significantly worse than other regions¹. There is also recognition that deep divisions still continue to damage our economy and society². With all these other concerns, it can be forgotten that the NI Assembly is still a relatively young political entity and direct rule over issues such as arts and cultural policy is still in its infancy. Public bodies and the arts sector still struggle to find a common language to discuss their respective needs.

Children are most affected by this bleak outlook. A recent Save the Children report states that more than 1 in 5 children here lives in "persistent poverty" and it anticipates this rising to 1 in 4 by 2020 unless changes to services happen³. Its report highlights the need for changes to income and benefits/family credit systems but also the need for positive groundings in literacy and promoting positive attitudes to education.

For Young at Art as an international organization, it is challenged by rising costs to get to and from the region but also by the increases in costs from other countries relative to the budget available within Northern Ireland. A relatively small indigenous private sector limits potential for corporate partnerships, a range of trusts have either withdrawn from Northern Ireland post-devolution or do not fund festivals, while lack of significant personal wealth restricts the market for private donorship. In essence the public and private sector financing for the arts to compete with its European neighbours is not there.

As a children's organisation, its mission is designed to look forward to a shared future for new generations and to change perceptions and ambitions from early childhood on. Now is the optimum time for the organisation to increase its provision to meet some of the needs of children in Northern Ireland and to develop relevant strategic partnerships but the issue of available resources remains an over-riding concern.

This strategy is aspirational, seeking to overcome these challenges with a compelling vision of how children's lives should be, the role arts and culture plays in those lives and how Young at Art and its work is intrinsic to a healthy society for our children, now and in the future.

¹ *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion-northern-ireland-2014>

² *Together: Building a United Community*, OFMDFM <http://www.ofmdfmini.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community>

³ *A Fair Start for Every Child – NI Briefing Paper*, Save the Children

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Policy_briefing_Northern_Ireland_Fair_Start.pdf

The Starting Point

Since 1998, Young at Art has engaged with over **450,000 children and adults**. This summarises some of the key achievements in the last 4 year-strategic period and is the starting point for this new strategy.

Young at Art has increased access to the arts

- Attendance and participation has grown annually from 34,870 in 2010-11 to 57,614 in 2013-14. At least 70% are children under 14 years of age.
- Provision across Northern Ireland has increased with events delivered in 13 local authority areas in 2013-14 (a rise from 7 in 2010-11).
- Affordability has been maintained. Over 80% of all costs is raised by the company, with most prices ranging from £0 to £7 up to 2014 and many events free to the public.
- Over 1,500 children each year benefit from hardship schemes and community ticket schemes, each running since 2006.
- Engagement programmes have grown - over 21 schools received support and extra activities in 2013-14.
- Access for children with special or additional needs has increased from planned programming and communication with families to include audio-described and relaxed performances in 2014.
- The festival is one of the only opportunities in the calendar year when children in Northern Ireland can see the work of international artists made especially for them. Since 2010, the organisation has presented multiple artists from France, Germany, Switzerland, Croatia, Scotland, Belgium, Wales, Italy, Spain, England, Holland, Ireland, USA, and Canada.

Young at Art is developing audiences for theatre, dance and visual arts

- Young at Art delivered 1,603 events between 2010 – 2014.
- 25% of all bookers to the 2014 festival came from the top 10% most deprived ward areas in Northern Ireland.
- Average audience capacity at ticketed events is 78% and many free events are oversubscribed.
- Festival audiences are from all over Belfast, over 30% from outside Belfast and 4% are from outside NI.
- Contemporary theatre in English, Irish and non-verbal has been presented with growing audiences.
- Contemporary dance provision has been increased from occasional productions to 2 – 3 per annum and full attendance at most performances.
- In 2013, Young at Art embarked on increasing family audiences for visual arts events, launching the first Belfast Family Art Map in September during Culture Night.

Young at Art promotes and develops NI artists locally and internationally

- 93 artists mentored and commissioned since 2010.
- Over 1,185 artists and freelance practitioners engaged between 2010 – 2014.
- Co-producer of NI's major Cultural Olympiad event, Land of Giants
- 75+ national and international programmers have visited the festival since 2010.
- Establishment of an annual NI Showcase.
- Representing NI in over 12 countries on multiple visits between 2010-2014
- Touring its own work to Ireland, England, Wales and USA since 2010.

Economically, the company has grown

- Turnover has grown from £371,655 in 2010-11 to £523,200 (across two companies) in 2013-14
- Funding is diversified – 31 different funding sources including private sector income in 2013-14
- Touring and regional provision delivered through a social enterprise trading arm since 2011, financed entirely through private sector contracts (20% of combined turnover in 2013-14).

Young at Art has faced and continues to face real challenges

- Available resources do not meet costs preventing long term planning and access for children.
- A pay review shows a minimum pay gap of over £21,000 compared to last agreed NJC Pay scales, hampering sustainability in the workforce and career progression.
- Limited budgets restrict artists' fees and contract lengths, leading to skills drain.
- Arts not understood at policy-making level hampering innovative and long term planning
- Straddling a range of sectors – arts (in various forms), education, early years, youth, tourism, festivals – Young at Art falls between policy gaps
- The arts lacks a consistent evidence base due to lack of investment in measurement.

Current Context

The Political Environment

Northern Ireland is a region within the UK with a devolved Assembly of 10 Departments, one of which is the Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure. The devolved Assembly is governed by an enforced multi-party coalition that, with few exceptions, splits along two political factions – nationalist and unionist. In practical terms the D'Hondt method of power-sharing means that ten departments are shared, proportionate to the number of voted Assembly members, by currently five political parties. The Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure (currently headed by a Sinn Féin Minister) is the smallest of the departments with the smallest budget and apports its resources across a number of arms-length bodies responsible for arts, film, creative industries, museums, libraries, sport and inland waterways. The current arts and culture budget dispensed from exchequer funds is the lowest in the UK and Ireland by some 50% with little growth in the last 15 years and little protection from cuts to public spending.

Until 2015, local services were delivered through 26 local authorities which are being restructured into 11 "Super-Councils" by 2015. Over the next 4 years a range of additional powers (such as planning and regeneration) will be devolved to these bodies. Evidence to date suggests the implications for arts and culture have been relatively under-examined, except in Belfast City Council (which invests more in arts and culture than any other council).

Young at Art's remit is arts for children and young people and the delivery of its festival and as such it straddles policy priorities in six departments (DCAL, DENI, DETI, DHSSPS, DEL, DSD) for arts, events/tourism, youth, community/voluntary sector, skills development, education and early years.

The Population - Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has a population of just over 1.8million and of this 333,000 are of school-going age, the target age range of the organisation. Although birth rates are falling, Northern Ireland remains one of the youngest populations in Europe. The civil unrest spanning more than 30 years has taken its toll on the society and economy of Northern Ireland. It has one of the highest rates of long-term unemployment in the UK and above average levels of depression and mental health disorders including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Suicide rates are higher, particularly among young men. For a variety of reasons (high levels of obesity, poor diet linked to poverty, closed island population and high levels of personal injury due to civil unrest), the region has one of the highest levels of disability or longterm health conditions in Northern Ireland – around 40% of households are home to someone with a longterm health condition or disability. By contrast, ethnic diversity in the population is extremely low with little inward migration. Barely 2% of the population belongs to an ethnic minority group⁴. Recent studies show that Northern Ireland is being more adversely affected by the recession than the rest of the UK – lower average incomes and higher cost of living (in part due to its small population base and isolated geographical position). There is also a high dependency on public sector pay, therefore the cuts to the public purse are being felt harder. Studies show children are being hardest hit with 1 in 4 children living in poverty.

Belfast currently ranks highest in deprivation levels in Northern Ireland. Despite a growing economy and significant regeneration, many of the city's population (and children) continue to live, study and work in the most deprived communities in Northern Ireland. Over 40% of the population have no or low qualifications with unemployment sitting at just under 6%. Young at Art has a NI-wide remit but is based, and delivers the bulk of its work, in Belfast (population 281,000, of which children and young people under 16 make up 53,821).

Education, Youth & Early Years

Education, Youth and Early Years policy is controlled by the Department of Education which in turn oversees five Education & Library Boards, although the Department of Health also has a role within early years activities. As the education system remains predominantly segregated, there also exists a Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the NI Council for Integrated Education. A common curriculum is taught across all sectors with discretionary subject studies in areas such as religious education and language options (eg the teaching of Irish) and the region still has a form of transfer test for second-level places in a secondary/grammar school.

Within the NI curriculum, Language & Literacy and The Arts are 2 of 5 key learning areas of the primary curriculum. The Foundation Stage early years curriculum prioritises creative play and development and there is an overarching emphasis on child-led and action learning through from early years up to Primary 7 (age 11 years). Most artforms are distinct subjects at GCSE and A-level but in the last 10 years specialist training in artform teaching has been cut or

⁴ NI Census 2011 http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census/key_stats_bulletin_2011.pdf

reduced. Informal anecdotal evidence from teachers suggests that confidence in engaging with the arts by teaching professionals is a major barrier for children's arts engagement in schools while budget and time restrictions are also a significant barrier. Literacy has been extended to take in Visual Literacy, recognising changing relationships with digital technology and how reading materials are increasingly delivered through other media. This has presented many opportunities in film, photography but as yet isn't fully realised for visual arts or drama and dance. The Literacy targets are focused on developing core reading and writing competencies in tandem but creative writing of fiction or poetry and critical appraisal of texts is limited.

The arts has proven intrinsic benefits to children in the development of their imagination, communication and interpersonal skills as well as promoting lateral and critical thinking skills, problem-solving and innovation. There are also many opportunities and evidence of benefit for artforms to be used as a tool for delivering other subjects. Drama and visual art have been shown to be highly effective to teach Personal Development and Mutual Understanding and The World Around Us and aspects of literacy, numeracy, environmental and science education. Core subject teaching in History, Geography, Maths, Technology and design and Languages can be delivered in a different more inspiring way through effective arts-based methods. A body of world-wide research shows that quality professional development for teachers in arts skills can contribute significantly to supporting those children who are under-achieving or disaffected with education and will support effective classroom management, behaviour management and helping students in Learning for Life and Work.

Arts & Culture

There are no statutory bodies for the delivery of the arts in Northern Ireland (ie no national theatre or state orchestra or state-run provider) so the arts sector in Northern Ireland is populated almost entirely by not-for-profit organisations, mostly small in scale. Within this, it supports a range of professional arts venues and galleries, a professional orchestra, a significant number of festivals and carnival companies, a number of fulltime theatre and dance companies, studio groups and a range of music centres and promoters. It boasts one of the few dedicated circus centres in the UK and Ireland and there is a significant community of artists and organisations working in the fields of community arts, voluntary arts, youth arts, disability arts and ethnic arts.

By dint of the population spread (over 50% live within 30 km of Belfast City Hall), the bulk of organisations (both local and regional providers) are based in the greater Belfast area with Derry City on the North coast also boasting a significant arts base. Outside of Belfast, most venues and arts centres are controlled by local authorities.

Public funding of the arts has been on a downward trend for over a decade and current budgets in 2014 stand at almost the same level as in 1997. National Lottery funding which was available in significant sums from 1994 fuelled many of the capital developments in the last 20 years and also masked public under-spends for many years but pre-Olympics this dropped considerably and has not been replaced. The knock-on effect is a depressed economy within the arts with many projects dependent on low or no pay and organisations responding to many different paymasters to find the budget to do the work. It has also hampered long-term planning and vision for the sector.

Despite the rather depressed state the region boasts a significant hit rate in terms of success. A general population survey in 2014 showed that just under 80% had attended an arts event the previous year with nearly half the population attending three times or more. 96% of all 16-24 year olds have attended an arts event in the last 12 months showing an upward trend in engagement for new generations. Northern Ireland produces award-winning and internationally successful writers, artists, playwrights, musicians and actors far in excess of what might be expected for the size of the place with Nobel Laureates, Oscar, BAFTA, EMMY and TONY Award winners and nominees, Turner prize winners, Whitbread and ORANGE Fiction and Poetry prizes.

A regional strategy for the arts is devised by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland reporting to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. Its latest strategy identifies key Ministerial priorities for present and future funding. This presents increasing access and participation and tackling social exclusion as top priorities. There is however a relatively small public sector budget for financing this initiative and a lack of clarity over how core provision of existing public arts activities (such as theatres, festivals and galleries) do or do not meet these priorities or whether they should be funded or not. Other funders from the public sector in the arts include the NI Tourist Board (which just recently cut its Events funding budget) and, to a lesser extent, departments such as Health and Social Development have discretionary pots for specific areas of work around regeneration or arts in health. The Department of Education has no ringfenced funds for arts in education, youth or early years.

Children and the Arts

Within the arts sector, since the establishment of Young at Art there has been significant growth in arts provision for children and young people across Northern Ireland but there is no joined-up plan across the public and voluntary sector for delivery or resourcing or indeed ensuring that all children have the opportunity to engage in the arts. There is also an emphasis on participatory practice rather than a rounded approach for all provision and a general lack of

understanding of the relevant benefits to children of being audiences AND participants. Anecdotally, there is also little evidence of review within audience development figures, of children and their families as audiences and little research into how they divide into children participating/attending with groups, schools or parents.

Strategy 2015 – 2018

Young at Art's previous strategy ran from 2011 – 2015. The Board of the organisation has worked closely with the executive and core staff to establish a refreshed vision for the Young at Art, establishing the needs of its wider community and anticipating their future growth and change. External support has been engaged as appropriate.

Vision

Young at Art's vision is that all children's lives are enriched through the arts

Mission

We deliver great arts projects and events for children and young people because we believe that the arts inspire joy, creativity and curiosity

Aims

1. Present arts activities and performances that provoke thought and emotion
2. Enable access to great arts activities for all children and young people
3. Engage with children and young people to develop their critical thinking and personal skills

The three aims will be supported by core business priorities under the following aim:

4. Sustain the organisation's mission for the future

Values

Inclusivity: We believe every child has the right to experience the arts. Children are at the heart of everything we do.

Ambition: We aim for big ideas and we strive for excellence and relevance in programming, communication, development and management.

Openness: We work hard to offer equality of opportunity and uphold transparency in our decision-making; we are enthusiastic partners and collaborators.

Strategic Objectives 2015 – 2018

Vision

Young at Art's vision is that all children's lives are enriched through the arts

Mission

We deliver great arts projects and events for children and young people because we believe that the arts inspire joy, creativity and curiosity

Present arts activities and performances that provoke thought and emotion

Deliver an annual international festival for children with a performing arts core

Develop children's relationship with visual arts and the public realm

Stimulate a love of stories & storytelling in children and young people

Enable access to great arts activities for all children and young people

Represent the rights of children to access the arts

Provide a range of accessible activities for a wide audience

Grow young audiences for specific artforms through partnerships

Support children experiencing barriers to the arts through targeted activities

Engage with children and young people to develop their critical thinking and personal skills

Deliver engagement programmes that connect with artform critique

Offer professional development in arts/arts in education

Explore and cultivate best practice

Sustain the organisation's mission for the future

Devise and implement a robust Financial Strategy

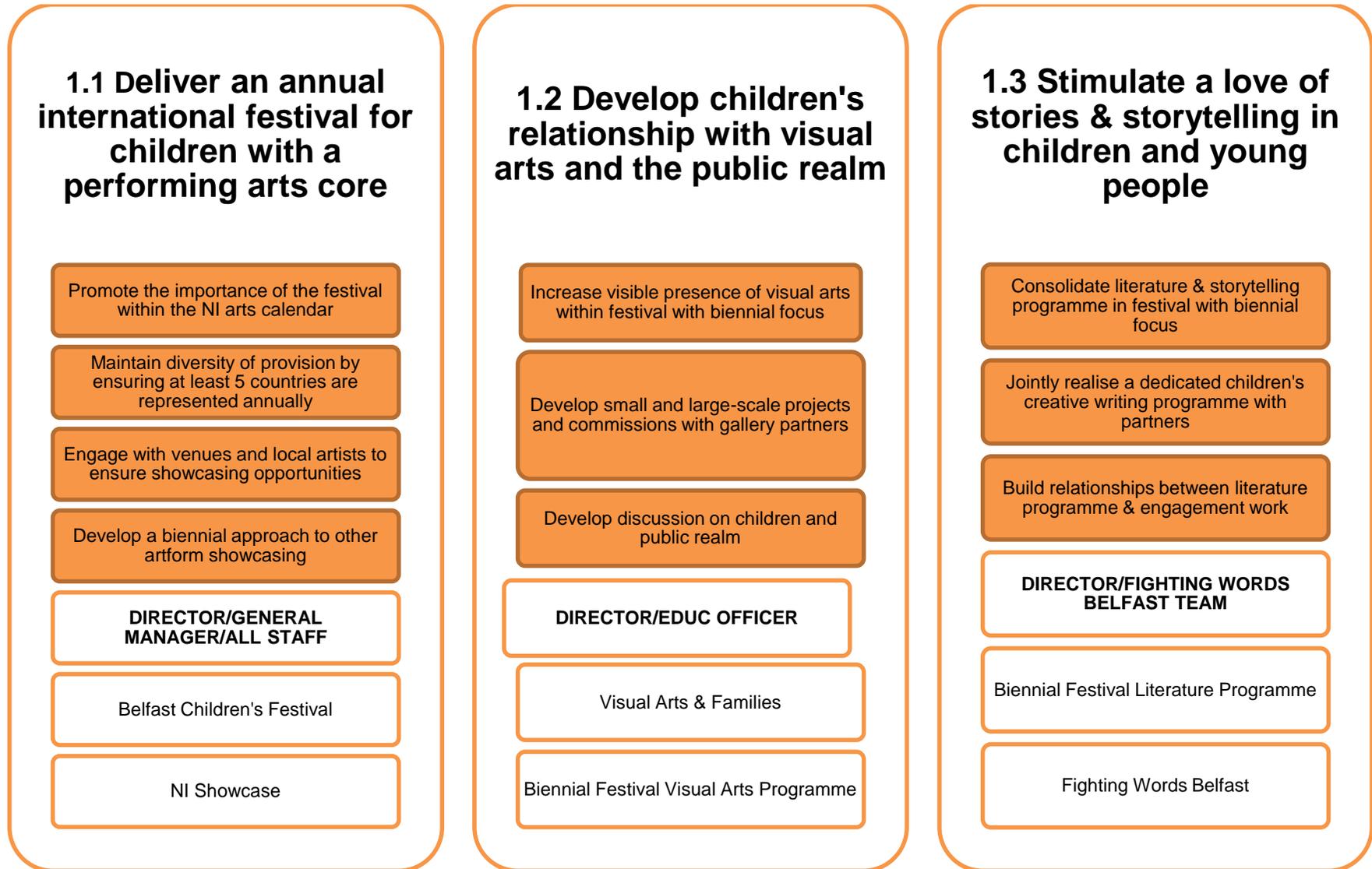
Investigate options for shared resources, partnerships and mergers

Maintain effective governance and act as a good employer

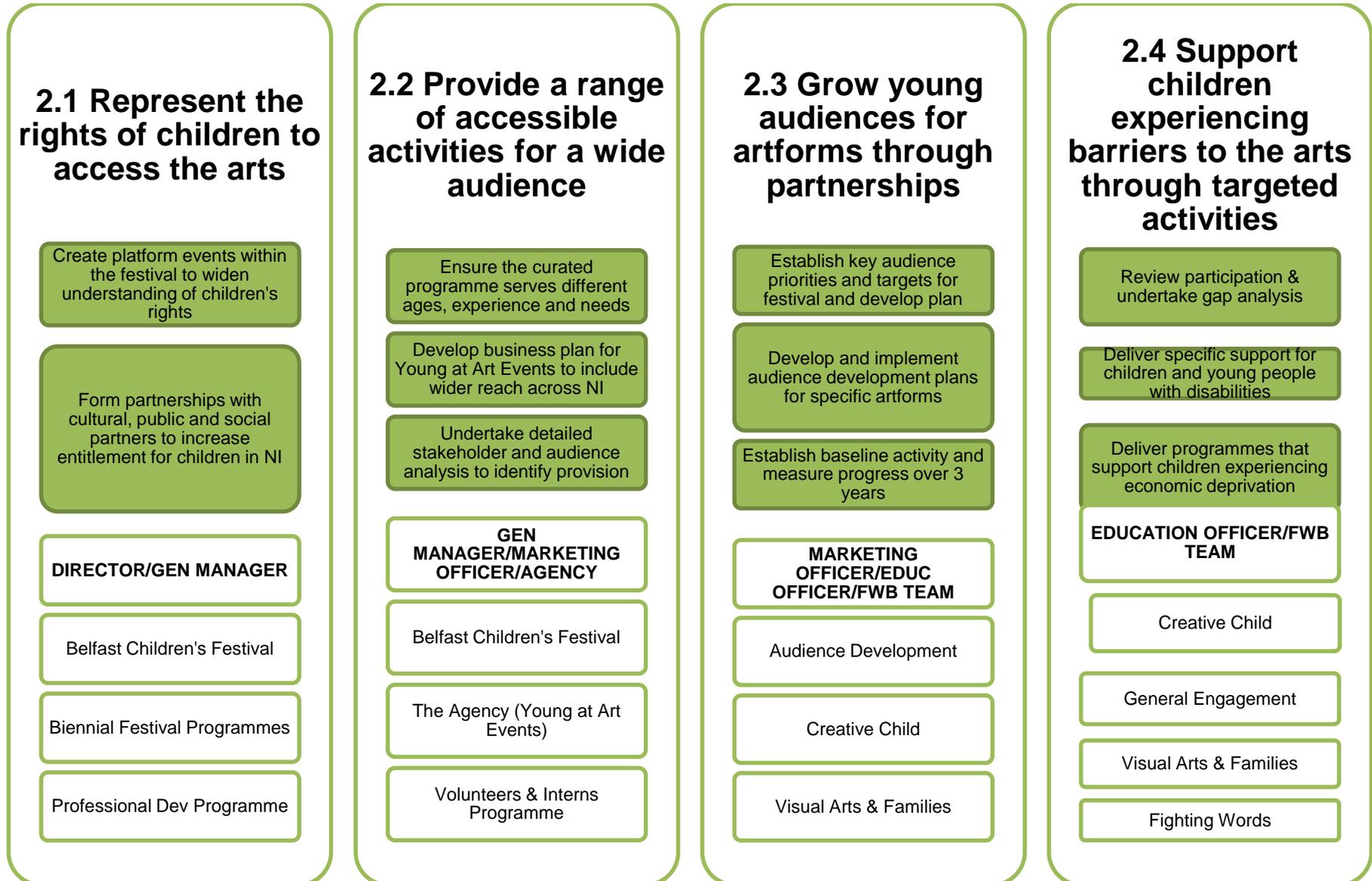
Develop and manage a Stakeholder Management and Advocacy strategy

Translating Objectives into Targets, Programmes of Work & Staffing

Aim 1: Present arts activities and performances that provoke thought and emotion in their audiences and participants



Aim 2: Enable access to great arts activities for all children and young people



Aim 3: Engage with children and young people to develop their critical thinking and personal skills

3.1 Deliver engagement programmes that connect with artform critique

Maintain and develop successful programmes for child engagement

Develop engagement model in more artforms

Widen impact to involve parents

EDUCATION OFFICER

Creative Child

Visual Arts & Families

3.2 Offer professional development in arts/arts in education

Deliver arts skills training course for teachers annually

Increase range of training on offer (more artforms and higher skills levels)

Grow skills base among artists for facilitation

EDUCATION OFFICER

Professional Development Programme

Creative Child

Fighting Words Belfast

3.3 Explore and cultivate best practice

Evaluate Young at Art's existing work and methodology

Offer annual platform events to explore aspects of arts engagement work

Research other models of practice and compare

DIRECTOR/EDUCATION OFFICER/FWB TEAM

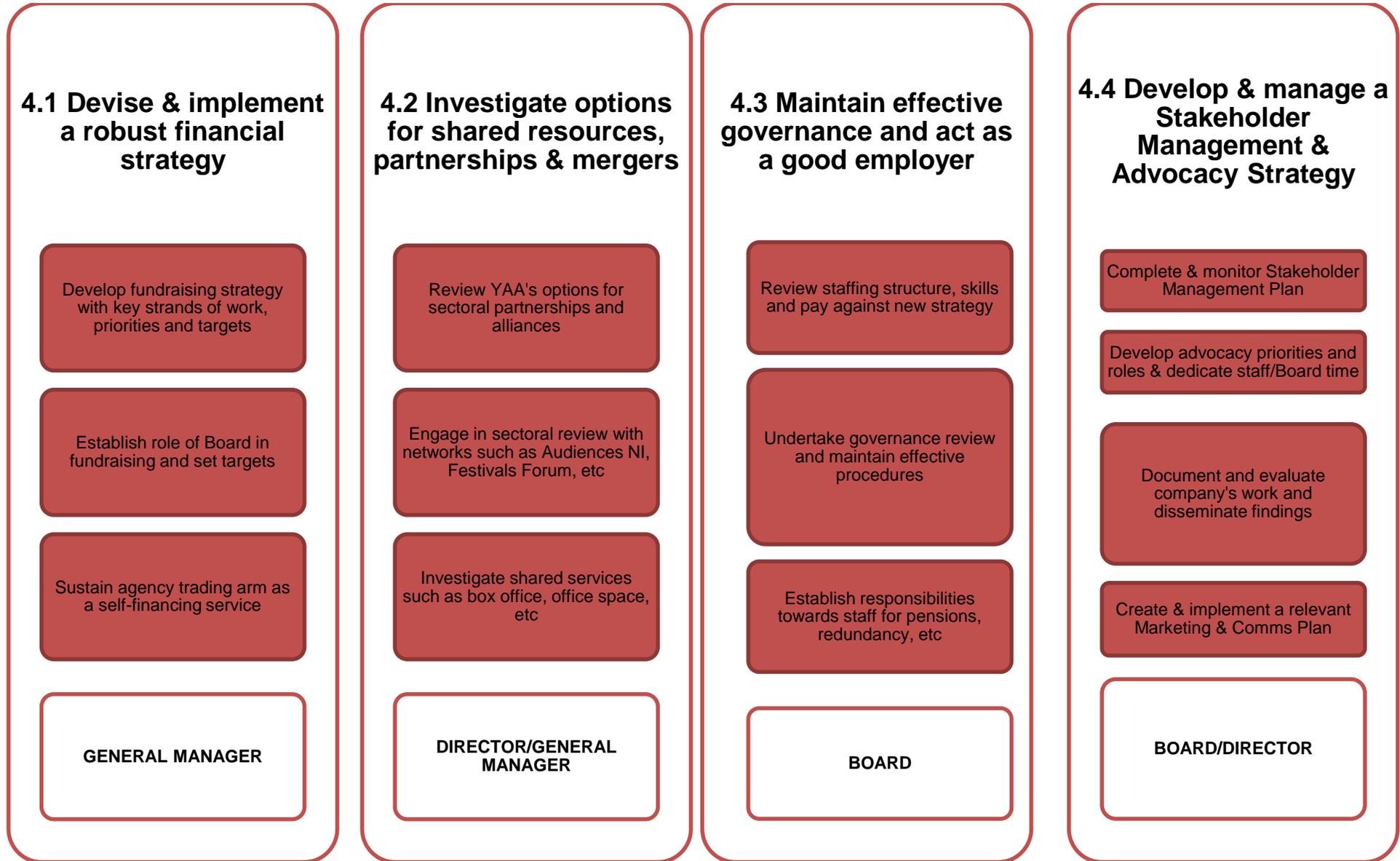
Professional Development Programme

Creative Child

Visual Arts & Families

Fighting Words Belfast

Aim 4: Sustain the organisation's mission for the future

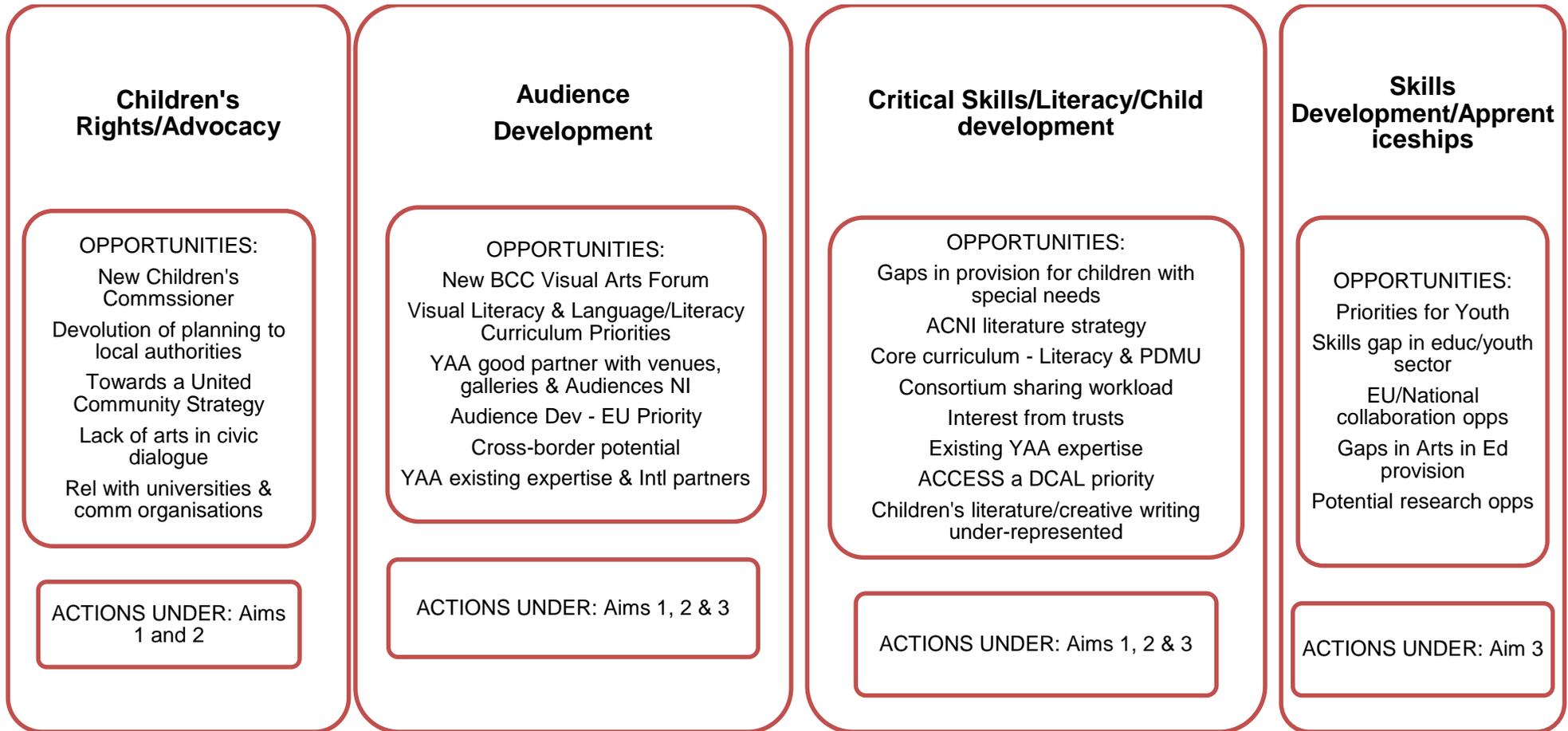


Translating objectives into Stakeholders & Opportunities

Young at Art is mindful that its mission achievement must complement wider public needs and policy agenda. Based on Stakeholder and STEEPLE Analysis, it has identified a number of gaps, key areas of opportunity and the planned 3-year objectives align to these. There is clearly overlap (the festival's delivery could play a critical role in advocacy for children's rights while critical thinking will be key in supporting the development of new and informed audiences) but for ease the dominant area has been selected. Other areas which present opportunities include:

- cultural tourism,
- contribution to the economy,
- promotion of diversity,

however, as areas of growth or opportunity these may be more challenging in the near future or represent a later stage of advocacy and development. A more comprehensive stakeholder analysis is included in the Appendices.



Programme Outline 2015 - 2018

Summary of Strands of Work

The programme outlines key themes and programmes of work which will be used to deliver the Aims and Objectives of the Strategy. As with all organisations, the ambition to meet need and demand is curtailed by access to resources (financial, staffing, artistic). The programme outlined places an expectation of fundraising on the company and, should the planned targets not be met, priority will be given as follows:

- The Belfast Children's Festival as the primary activity and one of NI's most significant arts events
- Activities that could feed into or arise out of the festival
- Projects and activities that could meet MORE THAN ONE aim within the strategy
- Projects with existing partners or where a sustained strategic relationship can evolve
- Projects that are likely to attract future funding

ARTISTIC PROGRAMME (Aim 1)

The Belfast Children's Festival is the core of Young at Art's work. It represents access to international artists that will not otherwise come to Northern Ireland. It is a significant public and industry highlight. It has become a significant platform for indigenous artists and is important strategically and publicly.

Performing Arts

Belfast Children's Festival – International Performing Arts Programme

A varied programme that changes each year will be offered featuring work from a range of countries. It will be ambitious and original. It will build connections for children to other diverse cultures and place children in Northern Ireland at the heart of international performing arts practice. The main emphasis will be on contemporary theatre and dance but the programme will also feature music and other activities.

Target: Provide unforgettable experiences for children here now and for future generations

Belfast Children's Festival – Showcase Programme

Since 2012, Young at Art has spearheaded a special showcase of indigenous performing arts for children and young people. This has yielded significant national and international opportunities for local artists and companies and brokered greater international engagement for individual artists. In partnership with local companies and venues, the festival will continue to run this successful programme.

Target: Build public and international profile of indigenous performing arts for children and young people

An array of supporting activities will be delivered through the engagement programme while audience development priorities will explore increasing access to all children and maintaining the broad and diverse audience base the festival has already developed. See below

Literature

With input from literary partners and the team of Fighting Words Belfast, Young at Art will build a biennial platform for literature for and by children and young people. It will link with both the Seamus Heaney Centre and the Department of Graphic Design and Illustration of Ulster University. Events will comprise author events, exhibitions of work, showcases of children's work, workshops, special projects, and special events for adults – professionals, parents and educators. The first literature biennial will be in March 2016.

Target: Create a highly visible public platform for the benefits of literature in all forms for children

Visual Arts

Building on its growing body of work in the visual arts field and based on research in 2014 carried out with gallery and studio group partners, Young at Art will grow a matching biennial platform of visual arts events and exhibitions that increase engagement by families in visiting and appreciating our galleries. It

will also revisit its work in children and public realm. This will be an ambitious new growth area which will require collaborative working and shared resources with partners. Its intention is to grow to commissions for temporary public realm pieces and exhibitions designed for children and families. The first visual arts biennial will be in 2017.

Target: Increase the presence of children and families in our galleries and public spaces

ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME (Aims 2 and 3)

General Engagement Programme

With a permanent Education Officer, Young at Art will sustain its ongoing work providing support for schools, groups and families experiencing deprivation to engage in the festival. Tried and tested methods will be continued.

Target: Sustain 25% of audiences from communities experiencing high deprivation

Young at Art will also consolidate and continue the work it has done in supporting children with disabilities. It will offer special projects, additional support and advice on events, relaxed performances, etc.

Target: Guarantee quality relevant provision for children with disabilities each year

Creative Child

The Creative Child programme began in 2013 and drew on previous work from 2011 - 2014 in developing drama and critical appraisal skills in children and the adults in their lives. It is an extended engagement delivering workshops combined with performance visits and offering additional support and training to parents and teachers. Outcomes have been extremely positive. It directly supports key priorities on child development and education, bringing under-engaged children forward and increasing literacy, confidence, imagination and critical vocabulary.

Target: Grow the number of children benefitting each year and deepen engagement

Fighting Words Belfast

Fighting Words Belfast has been established in partnership with Skainos Square in East Belfast, the 174 Trust and Fighting Words Dublin. Part of a growing international network and with Dave Eggers, Glenn Patterson, Roddy Doyle and Nick Hornby as its patrons, it is a free interactive project that inspires children and young people to write and develop their own voices in and opinions of literature. It will run workshops, summer schools, masterclasses and special projects all to increase children's right to write. Of unique value is its involvement in volunteers to deliver every activity. 2015 – 2016 will be a pilot year.

Target: Establish Fighting Words Belfast as a year-round fulltime project.

Visual Arts & Families

Working with partner galleries and studio groups, Young at Art will develop effective engagement methods and shared resources and knowledge to increase support for children in visiting galleries. This will include shared staffing/facilitators, educational resources as well as devising specialist tours and interactive experiences, and utilising its pop-up site, the Office of Important Art.

Target: Support families to engage with a vibrant gallery and studio group community

The Agency (Young at Art Events)

The agency is Young at Art's social economy business which provides quality arts experiences to children and families by selling a range of events and arts-based services to public and private sector clients. Each year it reaches 12,000 – 15,000 children and adults. It currently represents 4 productions, 2 exhibitions and an array of artist-led workshops. The agency try to build its UK and Irish bookings for local artists but will develop its business planning to target schools and youth groups in rural areas and to build relationships with the new supercouncils.

Target: Grow client base across Northern Ireland and export Northern Irish artists

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (Aim 3)

Annual Talks/Seminars

Young at Art has run an annual talks programme since 2001, interrogating topics in the field of youth arts. Its talks, seminars and tours explore key trends and share best or emerging practice in a range of artforms. This programme will continue in partnership with NI's universities and other partners.

Target: To grow knowledge of the benefits of youth arts and disseminate best practice

CPD for Teachers/Student teachers

Young at Art has created successful CPD for nursery and primary teachers and student teachers, exploring drama as a tool for learning and introducing critical appraisal of live performance. This is delivered in partnership with Stranmillis University College. It will grow training in drama, visual arts and literature.

Target: To deliver annual CPD training for teachers in 3 artforms and grow skills level

CPD for Artists

Underinvestment in the sector has led to a drop in specialist skills in the arts sector while Young at Art. Young at Art will invest in artists and grow the standard of work and their employability by offering facilitation skills training in drama, visual arts and literature at different levels.

Target: To improve the facilitation skills base of artists working with children and young people

Artists Mentoring

Continuing existing commitments to promote and support individual artists, YAA will mentor at least one artist to develop their work for children and young people. The organisation will also work with TYA NI partners to complete an international exchange for individual artists in performing arts to the Augenblick Mal, World Festival of TYA in April 2015. A final element will be the completion of an international exchange of individual artists starting in January 2015 and finishing by September 2015, supporting visits by artists to international festivals and events.

Target: to increase opportunities for individual artists to develop their practice with and for children

Volunteers & Interns

Young at Art was the first arts organisation in Northern Ireland to receive an Investing in Volunteers Kitemark. It will widen its volunteering work year-round. Volunteers will be all ages above 14 years. It will offer annual internships in partnership with universities.

Target: To widen arts volunteering opportunities for young adults, general population and older people

CORE THEMES (All Aims)

Children's Rights

Young at Art will advocate for children's cultural entitlement and engage with other children's organisations to promote the rights of children at all levels, through events, engagement work, etc.

Target: To promote change in how society addresses children's rights

Access

Young at Art believes that ALL children should have access to the arts with special support for children with greater barriers to arts experiences, be they through poverty, disability, geography or other circumstances. A principle of access will underpin all projects.

Audience Development

The organisation has engaged strategically in audience development since 2005 with audience relationships informing all core programmes. It will prioritise audience development partnerships in key artforms to achieve 3 key goals – increase number/diversity of children and families engaging in the arts; increase understanding of artforms among children and families; increase awareness of children's needs with galleries and other host venues.

Target: To grow audiences of children and family in their numbers, diversity and understanding

Measuring Impact

Young at Art is committed to building an evidence base for the benefits of its work. It will implement in-house processes to track its own programmes and will broker partnerships for independent review and research.

Target: To demonstrate the impact of Young at Art's work and disseminate it

BUSINESS PRIORITIES (Aim 4)

Financial Strategy

The Board and executive staff have successfully increased turnover but core and long-term funding remains limited. A strategy will explore options for this from public sector, trusts and private sector and earned income, and keep budget priorities under review. The Board will establish a working group to fundraise for the company's work, prioritising a donor campaign.

Target: Increase support from fewer larger sources for longer periods, strengthen funding base

The Agency will establish revised business targets and grow turnover. It will continue to evolve its portfolio of work for bookings both regionally and outside NI

Target: Further grow the agency business, range and turnover

Resource Sharing & Mergers

Young at Art have a proven track record of working in partnerships. It will harness this to explore increased collaboration such as resource/facilities sharing and all other options (including mergers) to ensure it contributes to viability.

Target: To identify all possible options for sustainability

Governance & Employment

The Board and executive staff will continue to operate governance to a high and proportionate standard and review policies and procedures regularly. Responsibilities for pensions will become compulsory in 2015-16 and the Board will prepare for this. It will continue to work on provision for redundancy should the company be forced to wind up. A salary review undertaken in 2014 exposed a minimum pay gap of at least £21,000 to bring current salaries level with appropriate voluntary sector rates but the company has been advised that this needs further review as some roles may need to increase higher. In addition, certain posts are under strain at part-time levels and need to move towards fulltime to deliver the strategy.

Target: Observe the principles of good governance and act as a good employer

Advocacy & Communications

A workplan to improve Young at Art's advocacy has been completed as well as a detailed Stakeholder analysis. The company will further develop this and increase its engagement with key stakeholders, particularly within the public sector, political life and the media. Following a re-brand in 2014 and consultancy support on key communications priorities, the company will continue to evolve an overarching marketing and communications strategy.

Target: Raise the profile of Young at Art's work and its benefits

Evaluation

Young at Art has had successful monitoring and evaluation methods for many years. Core staff oversee all elements and freelance artists and other staff use simple but effective data capture methods. In addition, use of affordable technologies such as its box office system, simple excel tables and Fluidsurveys have increased data analysis and feedback significantly.

With an Evaluation Framework in development by Young at Art for implementation in April 2015, the organisation will use the following methods of measurement.

Quantitative measurement:

- Details of total numbers x total number of sessions/performances across the period of the project
- Evidence-based analysis of attendance – using attendance data to measure origin of all participants and create a profile of the impact
- Appropriate budget measurement to ensure compliance and value for money
- Documentation of project reach (online links, google analytics, clickthroughs on site)
- Establishment of baseline data and progress measurement

Qualitative measurement:

- Creative evaluation – using arts-based techniques to elicit responses
- Use of evaluation forms (hard copy and on-line) post-event
- Evaluation/feedback walls/stands post-events and workshops
- Observation by staff and volunteers, post workshop/event debriefs which survey efficacy and impact
- Internal evaluation with key staff, feeding up to Board
- Update evaluations and debriefs with Volunteers during and after project
- Development of key case studies on aspects of work

Documentation will include:

- The work created (digital , online and hard copy)
- Photography and video recording of sessions
- Online archive
- Media coverage
- Print and other publicity materials

Audience Development and Marketing will track key metrics as outlined in its Marketing & Communications Priorities detailed in its Strategy 2015-18 (see Appendices). In addition, YAA will seek to build independent research partnership.

