

DANCE  
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Strategic Plan  
2025—2028

The National  
Organisation  
for Dance

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A roadmap  
shaped by deep  
listening, learning,  
and engagement  
with the dance  
community.



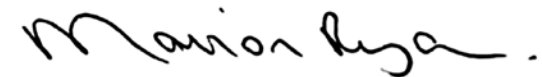
## A Joint Message from the Chair and CEO of Dance Ireland

We are proud to present Dance Ireland's Strategic Plan 2025—2028 — a roadmap shaped by deep listening, learning, and engagement with the dance community. It affirms our commitment to advancing the art form of dance, supporting artists, and responding meaningfully to a sector that is continuously evolving, and growing in diversity and complexity.

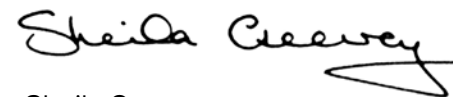
We recognise that the needs of dance artists have changed — in some cases profoundly — since our last strategic plan. The landscape is more uncertain in many ways, and we acknowledge the ongoing pressures facing artists and organisations working in dance. We are committed to making these challenges more visible while advocating for better conditions and resources.

At this pivotal time, we, as Chair and CEO, acknowledge the dynamic shifts within the arts and cultural landscape. As an organisation at the heart of Ireland's dance ecology, we are committed to leading with purpose and responsibility, championing sustainability, equity, and artistic ambition.

We now look forward to translating this Strategic Plan into an implementation plan that we can execute to meet the needs of the organisation.



Marion Ryan  
CHAIR



Sheila Creevey  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Established in 1989 as the Association of Professional Dancers in Ireland (which is still our legal name), our founding principles centred on providing support, resources, and representation; working towards a sustainable dance sector in Ireland. We continue to deliver on these principles, investing in artists and art form development, building a strong infrastructure and programme of supports that has national and international reach.

We operate DanceHouse as a national centre of excellence – a flagship home for dance in Dublin city centre, comprising six studios and an Artists' Resource Room.

Our members represent the breadth of the dance sector and include professional dancers and choreographers, organisations and educational institutions, pre-professional and early career dancers, makers, and students, as well as dance associates who work in support of dance and contribute to sector development.

### An Evolving Sector

Dance Ireland is part of a rich and interconnected ecology, driven by artists, organisations, and communities who are deeply invested in their work and in one another. We are inspired by the collective energy that continues to shape and sustain dance in Ireland and this strategy aims to build on those relationships and shared values.

### A Shifting Policy Landscape

This strategy has also been developed in the context of a changing policy environment that continues to influence and inform our work. Key national frameworks and initiatives — including the Arts Council's Making Great Art Work, its dedicated Dance Policy, and cross-cutting commitments to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Climate Action, Paying the Artist, and Safe to Create — provide both guidance and opportunity for aligned, impactful action.

### Informed by Research and Sector Voices

Our planning process has been enriched by a robust body of sectoral research undertaken over the past few years. This includes the Dance Think Tanks Report (2020), Dance Counts Reports (2021; 2022), the Prism Report (2021), and the Bonnar Keenlyside Report (2022). These studies have illuminated both the strengths and the systemic challenges facing the sector and Dance Ireland, and have helped shape our strategic priorities with evidence and insight.

When we launched our last strategy in 2018, we had a vision for bringing our community together, investing broadly in artist development, and moving forward together with purpose. What we couldn't have anticipated was that by 2020 we would be physically separated and isolated by a global pandemic, and that the vulnerabilities of the dance sector would be further exposed. While this period has been challenging for the sector, it has also opened new ways to connect, deepen our engagement, and create opportunities to do things differently. So, as we look to the future, we will build on this experience and learning, and this strategic period marks a deliberate shift in how we think, work, and lead.

As the landscape in which dance is created and produced has changed, we have reviewed our offer in response to the needs of artists and organisations, whilst acknowledging the constraints of our resources.

Responding to growth in size, diversity, and complexity of the professional dance sector over the past few years, we are focusing our programmes on sustainability for Dance Ireland and the sector. We now have fully resourced residencies, and a better networked sector of resources and expertise through the National Dance Residency Partnership, and other strategic partnerships.

We have designed an evolving programme of support that invests in artists at all stages of their career and creative cycle. Building on this, this strategy prioritises deep, sustained investments that will have a long-term impact for our members and the broader dance community.

As the national development and representative organisation, we have established our position within the broader arts ecosystem as a leading voice for dance. We have undertaken in-depth research, gathered insight and evidence to inform ourselves, our members, and policymakers. We will continue to prioritise advocacy for the professional dance sector as a key pillar in our programme, with a particular focus on pay and working conditions.

The evolving policy landscape demands increased governance and compliance. In response, we will bolster our infrastructure and capacity within Dance Ireland to ensure we can meet these obligations and effectively support the sector with corresponding efficiency and accountability.

In the past few years, we have strengthened our infrastructure through investment in new processes and technologies that respond to how society now interacts with information. We will continue to build on this, ready to respond and evolve as an organisation that thrives in the experience age.

We are looking toward the future, preparing for what is next in the context of a national and international dance market. This positions us to remain relevant and innovative, adapting to global trends while nurturing homegrown talent.

Our vision is of an Ireland where dance is valued as an art form and respected profession, and is actively, confidently, and accessibly part of people's lives.

We enable the development of dance as an art form, a professional practice, and cultural activity across the island of Ireland. To achieve this:

- We expertly support all those working professionally in dance.
- We invest in artists and art form development across all forms and practices.
- We build strong infrastructures with the capacity to deliver programmes of support and resources that have national and international reach.
- We are a strong voice for dance, advocating for our members and the wider dance community.

Three values inform Dance Ireland's Strategy 2025–2028, guiding how we plan, implement, and deliver our programme and manage our business in support of artists and art form development.

### 1. Sustainability

For now and for the future, ensuring Dance Ireland is a well-governed organisation, leading by example through developing sustainable and environmentally responsible practices, and delivering positive impact.

We take conscious actions to resource and secure Dance Ireland to continue to support artist, art form, and sectoral development.

### 2. Interdependence

Acknowledging that no artist is truly independent, supporting the development of a dance ecology that is connected, engaged, and thriving.

We invest our resources in infrastructure that coalesces and connects practice and research across and beyond the island of Ireland.

### 3. Inclusion

Embracing the breadth and diversity of cultural, creative, and performative practices in dance.

We learn and grow as an organisation through actively listening to our community and implementing equitable and accessible practices and opportunities.

Our Strategy sets the direction for Dance Ireland over this period, supporting us to create and to hold space for artists and the art form of dance which is ever evolving. To lead and, also, to be responsive. To work collaboratively with artists and stakeholders, within a moving and shifting ecology – nationally and internationally. To support the empowerment of artists and take co-responsibility with them for the development of the sector.

We will focus our resources on the following strategic priorities:

- Deepen Connection
- Build Expertise
- Advance Advocacy
- Foster Innovation





## Deepen Connection

Acknowledging the interdependence of the dance ecology in Ireland, our activities will extend our reach geographically and across the art form through:

- Focusing on the quality of the experience, depth of engagement, and opportunity for meaningful impact.
- Strategic partnerships and co-curation with artists and organisations.
- Expanding our membership, embracing the diversity of the sector, understanding nuanced needs, and supporting equitable access to resources and opportunities.

## Build Expertise

Recognising the breadth of professional dance activity, and the knowledge and experience needed for sector sustainability, we will invest in building expertise in the dance sector through:

- Being a learning organisation that embodies strategic and inclusive leadership.
- Supporting targeted professional development through our programmes and partnerships.
- Identifying opportunities to share knowledge from within and beyond our sector.



## Advance Advocacy

Working with the strength of our membership, partnerships, and networks, we will raise the profile and visibility of dance as a professional activity by:

- Building expert knowledge through quantitative and qualitative research.
- Holding space for artist-led initiatives, supporting a depth of engagement with art form and sector developments.
- Using our platform and resources to promote and disseminate information and opportunities to connect with and invest in dance.

## Foster Innovation

Preparing the ground for what is next in dance and supporting sustainability in our sector, we will build capacity for the future by:

- Investing in ideas and infrastructure that support a thriving dance ecology across the island of Ireland.
- Developing partnerships and frameworks that support risk taking and testing new models of practice.
- Strengthening existing models of practice and Identifying opportunities to explore innovative ways of working with dance, both within and beyond the cultural sector.

We will leverage the resources of Dance Ireland and the opportunities afforded by DanceHouse, our expertise and connections alongside those of our national and international partners, to create a programme of work that delivers on our strategy and the needs of an interdependent sector

Four key pillars align our programme with our strategic priorities:

### **1. Professional Development**

Developing, delivering, and collaborating on programmes and opportunities locally, across the island of Ireland, and internationally for artists to train, to develop their practice, and hone their craft.

### **2. Artist Support**

Investing in resources that support the research, creation, promotion, and distribution of professional dance productions. Leveraging our expertise and infrastructure to bring capacity to the sector.

### **3. Advocacy**

Raising the profile of dance and being a leading, expert voice advocating for the dance profession and the art form through research and representation.

### **4. Public Engagement**

Creating opportunities for professional dance practices and productions to meet diverse audiences through performance, participation, or promotion.

The delivery of the Dance Ireland Strategy 2025—2028 will be supported by a robust four-year business implementation plan. This plan will respond to our strategic priorities, taking into consideration: the resources required to support our ambition; the needs of our community and expectation of our stakeholders; our tolerance for risk; and our legal and ethical compliance obligations. We will ensure appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and impact evaluation are established, whilst allowing space for evolution in the sector. This plan will be reviewed annually by the Executive and Board of Directors of Dance Ireland.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who contributed their time and best thinking to the development of this strategy.

We acknowledge, with thanks, the support of the Board of Directors and the Dance Ireland executive team; and all those who participated in our ongoing research, strategy surveys, and individual consultations.

Our thanks also to Wove and Aad for their support in visualising Dance Ireland now and for the future through our new branding and communications.

We are grateful for the continued support of The Arts Council and Dublin City Council.





We are looking toward the future, preparing for what is next in the context of a national and international dance market.

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