



Galway City Community Network
Lionra Pobail Chathair Na Gaillimhe

Galway City Community Network CLG

Address: Westside Community Resource Centre
Seamus Quirke Road, Galway

Phone: +353 (0) 87 9326467 / (0) 87 4328489

Email: info@galwaycitycommunitynetwork.ie

Website: www.galwaycitycommunitynetwork.ie

Galway City Community Network, The Public Participation Network in Galway City

Re-imagining Our Outdoor Public Space Scheme 2021

GCCN Submission

March 2021

Preface

Established in 2014, **Galway City Community Network** (GCCN) is the Public Participation Network in Galway City. It represents groups and organisations in the community, voluntary and environmental sectors in Galway City.

Aim

The aim of GCCN is to co-ordinate and support the representation of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors in Galway City.

GCCN Role

The role of GCCN is to:

- **Facilitate representation** of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors on relevant local government, local development bodies and any local, regional, national or international structures deemed appropriate by GCCN.
- Act as a platform for the community, voluntary and environmental sectors to **develop policy and positions** on issues of common concern and to advocate for these policies and positions to be implemented.
- **Strengthen capacity** of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors, including to represent GCCN on all relevant structures.
- **Provide information** relevant to the environmental, social inclusion and voluntary sectors and act as a hub around which information is received and disseminated.

Galway City Community Network welcomes the announcement of the Outdoor Public Space Scheme 2021 that will support local authorities open up and create public spaces and facilities dedicated to the arts, culture and festivals. At a meeting to discuss the potential of the fund, GCCN Arts and Culture Linkage Group identified a number of priorities for the sector and how this fund could be used to address the needs of arts organisations in the city. These are summarised below.

Outdoor Public Space Scheme 2021

The Outdoor Public Space Scheme 2021 fund offers Galway city the opportunity to tangibly invest in **Outdoor Arts** and increase recognition of artforms under this umbrella. It is a chance to provide support for underdeveloped arts forms in the city including circus, street arts and street theatre. It is also an opportunity to support the arts to respond to COVID-19 in an innovative way and in the post-COVID recovery of our people and communities.

What are Outdoor Arts?

Outdoor Arts take place throughout the public realm, in streets, parks and squares, across cities, towns and villages, in festivals in fields and festivals in high streets. Outdoor Arts are supremely versatile and can take occur in a range of places and spaces. Outdoor Arts includes many different art forms including circus, theatre, contemporary dance, music, traditional dance, puppetry, comedy, visual art and digital art.¹

Outdoor Arts have incredibly diverse audiences as they bring art to where people are and are generally free to access. They are open, accessible, engaging, democratic and universal. This highly international

¹ Outdoor Arts UK, [OutdoorArtsUK | What are Outdoor Arts?](#)

sector is increasingly being recognised for the role it plays in social cohesion, place-making and community building.²

Overarching Principles

The GCCN Arts and Culture Linkage Group are suggesting the following as overarching principles for the fund.

Participation

For a project under this fund to have a positive impact on the arts, it is vital that stakeholders across the sector are involved in the development of the project proposal.

Universal Design and Accessibility

Spaces should be freely accessible and open to everyone ensuring access for all communities particularly for communities that face barriers to accessing the arts and culture including disabled people. Projects should be designed using universal design principles.³

Models of Best Practice

There should be a focus on artist and community-led models of best practice. Projects should ensure spaces for community participation rather than just consumption, in line with the new draft Arts Strategy. There should be a focus on communities in socio-economically marginalised areas that have less access to current arts provision.

Maximise Impact

Some of the most important spaces for outdoor arts are public parks, market squares, street corners and wide junctions. While built/permanent structures can be beneficial, we encourage that the funding would also be invested in items that are portable and multi-functional and can bring the arts to the urban centre as well as into communities. It is important to ensure items can be moved from place to place and be used by all.

There can be rich learning from projects across Europe however if plans are developed for a permanent structure, they need to be appropriate to the weather conditions of the city and designed to ensure they would provide sheltered space which is usable throughout the year. Spaces should be multi-functional including performance and engagement.

Innovative projects in other European cities illustrate the potential of this sector, for example the Merida Factory Youth Movement, Selgascano which incorporates a Skatepark, Urban Art, Street Theatre, circus activities, Music, Acrobatics, Performing Arts, Audiovisual Art, and dance.⁴

Practical things needed to maximise the potential of Outdoor Arts in Galway:

Building Work to Adapt and Improve Key Sites for Outdoor Participation and Performance

- An open space – accessible with basic amenities - that could host many events and workshops but also fit a Big Top tent (for example, Galway Community Circus is planning to purchase a small one to support programme delivery during COVID-19 restrictions).
- A partly sheltered space for performance and community participation designed to work with the weather conditions of the city and usable throughout the year.

² National Economic and Social Council (2007), *The Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion*.

³ [Universal Design Principles](#)

⁴ [Merida Factory Youth Movement / Selgascano | ArchDaily](#)

- Electrical power points – really practical and useful – saves a lot in generator rentals, fumes and noise.
- Removal of bollards, fixed furniture and general street clutter – clear the spaces so they can actually be used.
- Improvements of already used sites such as Shantalla Park (for example Galway Community Circus have low-cost ideas on improving this, or alternative sites for COVID-safe arts participation for all ages.)

Outdoor Event Infrastructure Stock

A stock of event infrastructure that local artists and arts organisations could use for their Galway-based events and performances to ensure that a higher proportion of production budgets would go to providing employment to artists and crew rather than buying and hiring production infrastructure. The equipment would be owned by the City Council but managed and maintained by a local event company (a long-term contract given to a local event company to run this scheme would be a way of supporting this vital sector that has suffered so badly from COVID-19).

- A stock of barriers, signage, lighting, radios etc. basic event infrastructure
- Marley flooring – vital for dance, circus and movement work
- Transportable tiered seating⁵ – vital to signpost to audiences where to gather and makes watching a show so much more enjoyable, such as:
 - Netherlands: [Mobiele tribune | Verhuurservice Nijkerk](#)
 - France: [La notice des « Petits Gradins » du Fourneau est en ligne et en libre accès - Le Fourneau](#)
- Roll out, durable brightly coloured carpeting/rugs – usually this is where all the kids sit and then the tiered seating accommodates the adults and then the latecomers stand behind. This is tried and tested at many street festivals on the continent, but vital for Ireland where the grass is invariably wet, the road dirty and the audience don't know how to behave if there is no clear visual picture for them of where they should go to watch the show. Circle shows really only work for the first two rows of adults standing if nobody will sit down.

Permanent Infrastructure

Outdoor infrastructure can create a social space that creates equality in access, usage and a space to create art/performances in a public setting. This fund could be an opportunity to develop the previously planned use of recreational zoned lands as identified in Galway City Development Plan 2011-2017⁶ and further specified in the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 with the proposed location of Lough Atalia for an outdoor amphitheatre.⁷ Alternate locations or multi locations could be explored for this fund looking at the role parks play as spaces for communities, arts and socialisation in the city.

An example of successful outdoor infrastructure is the development of UCC's outdoor amphitheatre as part of 'Honan Square Development'.⁸ This project implemented in 2002 and completed in 2003 provides a route for the public to engage in public art, theatre, meeting, performances and adds value to the social capital, economic development and socialisation of the city and communities.

⁵ These are laid out straight but you can build them to be hexagonal and so form a semi-circle shape.

⁶ Galway City Development Plan 2011-2017, p.120.

⁷ Galway City Development Plan 2017 - 2023, p.167.

⁸ [Honan Square Phase 1 and 2](#)