

Hello

Please find our responses to the questions

What else could the Arts Council do, beyond additional funding, to mitigate the impact of reduced funding on the arts?

- Lobby more effectively at a Welsh and UK level including sharing the impact of the arts more widely – eg economic, health and well-being, social justice, climate justice.
- Explore opportunities to stimulate commercial market in visual arts in Wales to support income for artists and wider reputation of culture in Wales.
- Use their overview and connections across networks more effectively to encourage organisations to share resources and intelligence around key priorities such as environment, organisational transformation, social justice, cultural democracy.
- Stimulate journalistic opportunities in Wales. We have a world-class school of journalism with virtually no writers reaching UK and international press. A robust network will support reputational growth and interest in our nation's great offer. This will have a knock-on effect to attracting more funding, growing audiences, improving reach of cultural tourism, etc.
- Lead a debate, consultation and lobby for a universal basic income for artists such as that in Republic of Ireland.
- Consultation and information gathering on Unions for artists (visual) such as those successful models in England and Scotland.

Have you applied for the Arts Council's additional funding for resilience in the sector? Do you have any comments about the pace and design of this funding?

Yes, we applied for this. The opportunity to apply for additional support was very welcomed.

It was a difficult application to respond to for many reasons:

- We were asked to send a project outline before we could receive an application form. This was challenging and stressful. The timeline for that was an immediate turnaround to give enough time to then flesh out the full application. The short turn around and with no opportunity to speak with an ACW officer in advance meant that we were fearful to get the ask wrong and exclude ourselves from the funding opportunity.

- It was a small pot of £1.5m to make the ‘sector resilient for the future’ – this is over ambitious given the scale of funding cuts and impact of other cost-of-living and inflationary pressures.
- The turnaround time was 12 days (there were 2 weekends in that time, so 8 working days to prepare a critical application.
- Difficult to respond to the statement that ‘organisations who don’t evidence how financial support will improve longer term sustainability will be a lower priority for funding’.
- No time to interrogate budgets to ensure they were clear and responding to the ‘project’.
- We could not apply for money to ‘bridge the gap’ but that’s exactly where the greatest challenge for the future of sustainability for cultural organisations lies.
- The majority of the funding must be claimed by 31st March 2025 which doesn’t reflect support for resilience. Also, it’s a project grant therefore by definition a restricted fund that cannot be used for general core costs. We have asked for funds to help strengthen our staff team in the short term in the hope that they can generate the funds to make their roles self-supporting in the longer term – it’s a tall order in a short amount of time. The short availability of this funding makes it difficult to determine how long we can protect jobs. Additionally, the application went in before the recent budget announcement around increases in NI contributions for employers; this has an enormous impact on charities of our scale and size.
- Overall, the objectives of the fund did not match the criteria for the application.

Do you have any observations on the timings or scope of the Arts Council’s reviews into English language theatre and traditional music? (They are being conducted 11 months after the Investment Review, when National Theatre Wales lost its funding)

This should have been conducted before the investment review to allow a broad consultation to inform decision making.

A respondent to the committee’s consultation said “There is a sense within the arts sector that the Arts Council are under pressure, and should not be disturbed unless absolutely necessary”. Is this a fair description?

We are aware that there are fewer specialists within ACW due to cuts so understandably they are stretched. We know that arts officers are less likely to attend Board meetings or be available at short notice to support. There is less attendance at events by ACW officers than there was pre the Investment review and the cuts which brings into question their understanding of the sector at this time.

There seems to be a gap in the reporting we do as funded clients which is all about jobs and what ACW used to be interested in, which is the activity, impact and reach, which maybe indicates they have less capacity to support the arts.

As individuals our officers are supportive, but they have little capacity to change or influence anything. We don't feel like we should not approach them, but we are aware of their lack of capacity.

Kind Regards

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Chapter