



VISION

The vision of Backstage Theatre is to enhance the cultural landscape of Longford, celebrate our artists, enrich the lives of people in our community and contribute to the development of the arts nationally.

MISSION

Present a high quality, diverse and innovative programme of arts activities which is valued by and engages the community we serve and which provides a platform for artists and companies to create and present their work.

VALUES

Inclusion – Reflecting a diverse population

Excellence – High Artistic Standards & Professionalism

Innovation – Ambition and Creativity

Welcoming – A Customer focus

Collaboration – Working in Partnership

Respect - Team Spirit

Accountability – Good Governance & Transparency

Sustainability & Resilience

Building on our history

In 2020, the first year of this strategic plan we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the opening of Backstage Theatre and recall how the vision of our founders continue to inspire us today. The genesis of Backstage was the original Theatre for Longford project in 1991-2, the initiative of Backstage Theatre Group and Longford Slashers GFC, which evolved from a £450,000 project into a million pound project after much research by the founding committee. Opened in 1995, Backstage comprised of a 214 seater auditorium and Atrium Gallery. In 2010 a studio space (capacity 80) was added, funded by the Department of Arts under Access 11 and Longford County Council. Backstage Theatre has been funded by the Arts Council from the outset and is also funded annually by Longford County Council. For 25 years Backstage has been a leading force in the promotion and development of the arts, presenting a diverse and high quality programme of touring theatre, dance and music. In recent years our focus has shifted to include a community centred programme. We have delivered a number of major community projects to a diverse range of communities from young people to marginalised communities such as people with intellectual disability and our new communities of immigrants and asylum seekers. These projects have brought a new dimension to our work, bringing communities in Longford together and reinforcing the capacity that Arts and Culture have to unify and empower people.

Our Strategic Priority Areas.

Backstage Theatre has identified the following six strategic priority areas and their related goals, which we are committed to implementing (or achieving) over the five year period 2020-2024

1. Artistic Programming
2. Artists Supports
3. A Community Focus
4. Partnerships and Collaboration
5. Sustainability
6. Organisational Effectiveness

1. Artistic Programming

Backstage Theatre will continue to ensure that quality is at the heart of our Artistic Programming strategy

Goal 1: Present a multi-disciplinary programme that will engage, entertain, challenge and stimulate



The Dead School
Nomad in Association with Livin Dred Theatre Co

Our Actions to achieve goal

Continue to present a programme of the highest artistic and production standards that features a diverse range of art-form including theatre, music, dance, comedy.

Maintain & develop the programme of performances and participatory projects aimed at children and their families.

Reaffirm our commitment to a program model of variety and diversity to appeal to all economic and social segments of the community to make the arts more relevant for all people in Longford and surrounding areas.

Continue to explore other and new program possibilities.

Ensure young people have an opportunity to inform the development and evaluation of our programme.

Develop and implement a Marketing, Communications & Social Media Strategy that will increase the brand visibility of Backstage across Longford and the midlands, raise awareness of our programme and projects and maximise our audience potential.

Success Indicators of goal attainment

Research, data collection and evaluation demonstrates that our multi-disciplinary programme is successful and faithful to our strategic purpose.

The introduction and development of a Young Curators and Young Critics programme giving the young curators control over two festival programmes and the young critics an opportunity to review both individual shows and our overall programme.

The development and implementation of a new marketing and communications strategy

The development and growth of our programme for children, particularly participatory programmes such as 'Playmaking' and our theatre camp programme.

The development of our literary programme, working with partners such as Words Ireland

The presentation of at least one new programme area or art-form in the five years of this plan.

Our audience growth projections are met or exceeded each year of the plan.

2. Artist Supports

Contribute to the development of the arts by providing quality professional development opportunities for artists

Goal 2: Support Artists in the development of their practice



Welcoming the Stranger
An Artist residency with Catherine Young

Our Actions to achieve our goal

Continue to provide opportunities for artists, including theatre makers, performers, playwrights, and visual artists to create, develop and present their work.

Build on our programme of residencies, both long term and short-term, to support artists in the creation and development of work.

Provide resources such as technical, administrative and marketing support, to Artists to enable them to create and present work while in residence.

Maximise funding opportunities to support the delivery of residency programmes and the development and creation of work during artist residencies.

Provide a vital link between artists and their audience, assisting them in connecting with existing and new communities and promoting the work of visiting and resident artists as widely as possible to help build an audience for their work.

Success Indicators of goal attainment

The provision of at least one residency programme for each of the five years of the plan.

Our support for artists will have supplemented the supports provided for in the Arts Council three year plan 'Making Great Art Work 2020-2022'

We can demonstrate that we meet at least the industry standard and rates in terms of pay and excellent working conditions for professional artists

Artists consistently feel supported, encouraged, respected and valued at Backstage Theatre.

3. Community Focus

Continue to honour our commitment to Longford and surrounding communities and our belief that art can change and enhance lives.

Goal 3: Encourage, facilitate and celebrate active participation in the arts locally.



Playmaking
An Artist Residency Project with Maisie Lee

Our Actions to achieve our goal

Deliver a programme of quality, artist-led community based projects to ensure quality engagement and participation in real and meaningful arts experiences.

Engage with schools and community groups in the region to ensure active participation in the arts for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

Support the development of amateur drama in the region, working particularly with our founding and resident group, Back Stage Theatre Group, ensuring that amateur drama groups have an opportunity to engage with theatre professionals to nurture and develop their artistic practice.

Nurture our relationship with Backstage Youth Theatre and help to add new dimensions to the youth theatre members' arts experience by continuing to provide access to theatre professionals.

Continue to engage with and support arts festivals in the region, such as Aisling Children's Arts Festival and Cruthú Arts festival, to help them deliver ambitious, artistic programmes.

Continue to develop programmes for children, particularly participatory programme such as our Easter Camp and Summer Camp and Artist Residency Workshop Programmes such as Playmaking

Success Indicators of goal attainment

Ongoing support for local artists, performers, playwrights, visual artists, community groups, amateur drama groups

Ongoing engagement with and support for schools, community groups, Backstage Theatre Group, Backstage Youth Theatre.

Ongoing engagement and support for Arts Festivals: Aisling and Cruthú.

The delivery on one collaborative theatre production with the resident youth theatre annually

The introduction of a new amateur drama programme engaging a professional theatre director and other theatre practitioners to facilitate workshops with drama groups and mentor one drama group on an in house production each year.

The implementation and bi-annual review of policies and practices, relating to the use of the facility by community arts groups and schools, including financial aspects and availability.

4. Partnership & Collaboration

Reaffirm our commitment to work with all of our stakeholders to enable the achievement of our collective ambition.

Goal 4: Work with funders, sponsors, artists, resource organisations, networks and the arts community to create opportunities that benefit artists and the wider community



Taming of the Shrew
Rough Magic Theatre Co

Our Actions to achieve our goal

Continue to engage with the Arts Council and work together to deliver on the strategic priorities of Making Great Art Work.

Nurture and strengthen our relationship with Longford County Council, working together to achieve our mutual aims and enhance the cultural landscape of the county.

Collaborate with Co Longford Arts Office, Creative Ireland Longford and Co Longford Library and other leading arts organisations locally to ensure that Backstage Theatre is a central player in cultural development and arts provision in the region.

Continue to develop our role in venue networks, Nomad and Nasc, to ensure Backstage has access to the large scale touring theatre and dance.

Develop and expand links with people and groups with specialist knowledge in the arts in order to maximise our potential to achieve innovation and excellence in the promotion of the arts.

Liase closely with local media to increase their awareness of Backstage Theatre's activities and to establish how the Backstage can assist them to this end.

Success Indicators of goal attainment

Regular meetings with Longford Council Executive and presentations to elected representatives, positioning the arts and Backstage Theatre as a key element of economic development.

The effective delivery of our strategic plan to compliment and supplement the priorities of Making Great Art Work.

A review and evaluation of the degree and effectiveness of media coverage of events and activities at Backstage

We collaborate in at least one major touring production in collaboration with each of the two networks Nomad and Nasc annually

The strengthening of our longstanding relationship with Shawbrook to improve the breadth and quality of the supports offered to dance artists and build audiences for dance in the region.

Our continued collaboration with Words Ireland to develop a dynamic literary programme and create more opportunities for writers.

5. Sustainability

Our commitment to sustainability is rooted in our rigorous governance structure, our sound business practices and our prudent financial management

Goal 5: Secure the future and long term viability of the theatre



**Plaza Suite
Rough Magic Theatre Co**

Our Actions to achieve goal

Monitor and update a business model for financial sustainability, including financial controls, spending limits, reporting, and budget planning cycle.

Examine ways that the theatre can generate additional income in areas such as box office, venue hire and bar income.

Maximise Funding and sponsorship opportunities, by evaluating and investing resources in fundraising activities, building on the work already undertaken with RAISE

Identify and provide for the maintenance and upgrade needs of the theatre building, technical equipment and physical plant over the next five years.

Identify, and implement where possible, any necessary upgrades to energy efficiency and changes to waste disposal practices in order to reduce our carbon footprint.

Address the question of succession at both Board and Management level in order to future-proof the organisation and ensure long-term sustainability.

In recognition of the value and importance of our volunteers in delivering our programmes, develop and execute plans to sustain the number of volunteers required for the theatre's operation.

Success Indicators of goal attainment

We can demonstrate that we have met or exceeded all our annual budgeted targets, including our additional income generation targets

The completion of an analysis of ticket pricing and venue hire charges, including comparisons with other theatres, with a view to optimizing box office revenues

The continued multi-annual support of Longford County Council in support of our mutual aims and adherence to the terms and conditions of this support.

The development and implementation of a new fundraising strategy

Our planned sponsorship / fundraising targets are achieved or exceeded.

We continue to meet requirements for, and adhere to set targets and timetables for public funding from all sources.

All approved capital projects are completed on time and within budgets.

A reduction in our BER rating

The faithful implementation of this five year plan 2020-2024 and the completion of an annual review of progress for each of the five years of the plan.

Support and recognition of volunteer staff will continue and grow over the period of the plan.

6. Organisational Effectiveness

Backstage Theatre will continue to focus on and enhance our existing progress and commitment to ensuring our organisation operates effectively and efficiently.

Goal 6: Maintain best practice with regard to all aspects of good corporate governance.



Transitions Dance Co

Our Actions to achieve our goal

Establish and maintain a 5-year planning cycle and undertake an annual review and report on the status of the strategic plan goals

Review and revise our organisation structure, as appropriate, to ensure that it supports the effective and efficient delivery of our strategic priorities

Allocate the necessary resources to the development of our human resources, as an essential element in delivering artists supports and a high standard of service to customers.

Review and restructure our Board of Directors and its committees to coordinate with and support the new strategic plan.

Increase Board effectiveness through recruitment, orientation, engagement and evaluation.

Continue to review, renew and/or develop policies and procedures in all areas such as Health & Safety, HR, and succession planning for board and staff.

Provide regular updates and progress reports on the Strategic Plan at board meetings.

Success Indicators of goal attainment

The board, and committees of the board, have the collective knowledge, expertise and influence to advance our ambition, ensuring that the voice of the professional artist is heard and represented.

The completion of a full review of staff resources and the recruitment of additional staff, where the need is identified.

The engagement of a part-time staff member to address the area of fundraising.

The completion of an annual review of staff salaries and the implementation of salary increases, where necessary and within the limits of our financial constraints.

The completion of a full review of staff training needs and the introduction of a staff training programme to address any needs identified.

APPENDIX 1

Backstage Theatre Strategic Plan for 2020 – 2024 has been extended to include 2025. We have identified additional Actions and Success Indicators within our strategic priorities, that will be implemented and achieved within this timeframe.

ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING

Action: Examine and address any gaps in the programme that might be inhibiting our ability to support marginalised artists and reach a diversified audience

Success Indicators: Measure engagement and audience diversity with sporadic box office surveys and bi-annual surveys via email.

Compare & contrast audience address profiles against demographic regions highlighted in the 2021 Census.



A Call To You by Artist in Residence Catherine Young

ARTISTS SUPPORTS

Action: Expand on our programme of residencies and supports for artists

Success indicators: From 2020 to 2022, we have delivered 25 Activate Residencies supporting 90 artists in all. We will continue to develop this programme, strengthening the support to more artists and continuing to add value to the resources offered

Introduce longer term residencies for lead Artists in Residence. A three year residency, incorporating an artist on the theatre payroll, would offer both financial security & and the creative freedom that comes with longer stability for artists.

COMMUNITY FOCUS

Action:

Ensure active participation in the arts across all races and abilities, broadening and deepening our connection with the local community through a range of projects

Success Indicators:

Build on the success of projects such as Pro-Am-Dram, connecting local drama groups with professional directors and honing their skills both on stage and behind the scenes.

PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION

Action: Continue to nurture the positive impact of networks such as NASC & Nomad in the arts sector. Develop & expand relationships with other arts organisations ensuring a symbiotic approach to projects.

Success Indicators:

The expansion and development of projects such as

Young Curators to a network wide programme has and will continue to ensure more artists are supported and more young people are exposed to the benefits & opportunities of working in the arts sector.

Capitalise on the momentum achieved from joining forces with Meitheal & Shawbrook for our 2022 Activate Programme. Working collaboratively with these organisations will ensure a richer experience for artists

SUSTAINABILITY

Action:

Implement strategies drawn out in our Audience Development Plan to reinforce current audience good will and ensure the theatre is reaching as wide & diverse an audience as possible.

Success Indicators: Benchmark audience figures against previous shows and track growth. Measure engagement and audience diversity. Ensure new audiences feel valued and represented. Ensure repeat visits are encouraged with new audiences

ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Action:

Develop and adopt a robust Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity policy

Introduce real, meaningful and tangible projects aimed at deepening our connection with a culturally diverse population

Success Indicators:

Participation in EDI training programmes and a continued deepening of our organisation-wide understanding of EDI

The engagement of a professional consultant and arts worker to lead a project aimed at deepening our connection with a culturally diverse population