

Culture Development Workplan 2025 / 2026

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
Core multi-annual funding	Management of year 4 of cultural multi-annual funding programme (CMAG). Two-year funding 2024-2026: £473,425 to 15 Festivals and Events organisations and £ 587,462 to 30 Arts and Heritage organisations Four-year funding 2024-2028: £600,240 to four Festivals and Events organisations and £791,783 to ten Arts and Heritage organisations	April 2025 to March 2026	£2,452,910
Small Grants - Arts and Heritage	Programme of project grant support for cultural organisations as a new strand of investment programme to support cultural strategy outcomes.	April 2025 to March 2026	£178,788
Small Grants - Community Festivals Funding	Programme of project grant support for cultural organisations as a new strand of investment programme to support cultural strategy outcomes.	April 2025 to March 2026	£69,000 + DfC match funding £10,000 Grants admin linked to CFF
Artist Studios and Creative Workspaces	A continuation of scheme to support Belfast based artist studios and maker spaces to ensure a stable infrastructure for 2025/26.	April 2025 to March 2026 Launched June 2025	£150,000
Artist Studios and Creative Workspaces	Continuation of phase two of targeted capacity building programme with Artist Studio and Creative workspace sector in partnership with Arts and Business NI. Continued development of a 5-Year action plan for Creative Workspaces.	April 2025 to March 2026	£30,000
Sector Support Programme	Design and deliver wraparound support programme aligned to investment model. Includes support for Festivals Forum, Belfast Visual Arts Forum and Green Arts Forum. Implementation of recommendation from Cultural Enquiry by Core Cities network. This will establish a governance and investment model for culture in the city.	April 2025 to March 2026	£80,000
Research and development	Commission further research and engagement, collect and analyse data to ensure strategic approach to investment and delivery.	April 2025 to March 2026	£50,000
Heritage development	Development of phase two of Heritage Audit and Roadmap for development, including development of targeting skills, and capacity building programmes and designing action plans and events through a co-design process. Includes strategic partnership with Belfast Stories, BCC Climate Team and Brink for pilot programme entitled "Growing a Museum".	April 2025 to March 2026	£70,000 Up to £60,000 (total BCC budget to be met across depart budgets) with £20,000 from Culture

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Cultural animation and Art in Public Realm	Further develop a 'City as a Gallery' or 'Art in the Public Realm' initiatives including Belfast Canvas and Art Unwrapped with Ulster University and National Museums NI Development of phase two of "legal walls" pilot programme and mentoring programme for Street Art Community.	April 2025 to March 2026	£25,000 £30,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Delivery of Blueprint Programme (yr 4) in partnership with Arts and Business NI	April 2025 to March 2026	£30,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Continue partnership with University of Atypical to promote accessibility in cultural spaces and support training for disability champions within the cultural sector.	April 2025 to March 2026	£25,000
Capacity Building	Support capacity building programmes including co-design of programmes for underrepresented groups or where gaps are identified. Support established organisations to adapt to change and to support new organisations and practitioners to take longer term risks in programming or creative development. Development and delivery of catalyst projects and programmes with community partners. Scoping and development of Culture Belfast social channels to highlight impact of investment and cultural activity in the city	April 2025 to March 2026	£80,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Work in partnership with Theatre & Dance NI to deliver a professional 3 year development and capacity building programme 'Transform' (2025-28) for artists in theatre & dance sector at differing career stages, focusing on networking, mentoring and creation.	April 2025 to March 2026	£45,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Work in partnership with Craft NI to deliver inclusive programme of showcase and professional development events for makers in Belfast including growth of August craft month. Includes development of a new mentorship and capacity building programme for craft makers.	April 2025 to March 2026	£35,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Partnership with Visual Arts Ireland to deliver a Peer Support Programme. Connecting Visual Artists who fall outside of the studio framework, to include those in rural areas, connecting them to the Belfast Art infrastructure. Providing professional development skills and engagement.	April 2025 to March 2026	£10,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Partnership with Thrive audience development agency to support audience development across the sector.	April 2025 to March 2026	£20,000
Sectoral Development and Strategic Partnerships	Work in partnership with Creative Ireland, Theatre and Dance NI and the Belfast International Arts Festival to deliver the Culture Ireland Showcase of local theatre and dance for the international market	April 2025 to March 2026	£30,000
Sectoral Development and	Develop schemes to support higher participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people including Gig Buddies programme 2025 – 2028 in partnership with the Black Box.	April 2025 to March 2026	£45,000

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Strategic Partnerships			
Engagement	<p>Develop phased process to shared placemaking through cultural interventions. Deliver first phase by commissioning artists to create shared resources for community events. Support capacity building programme for socially engaged artists and up to 3 pilots of City Artist residencies. Deliver Arts & Wellbeing activity through partnership with CHOICE research project on health and social inequalities of people with long term mental illness and Women's Aid Refuge. Programme shared learning series of best practice in participation for cultural sector.</p> <p>Bank of Ideas, a participatory budgeting programme enabling the people of Belfast to propose and collectively decide on creative projects.</p>	April 2025 to March 2026	<p>£115,000</p> <p>£75,000</p>
Culture Night	Public procurement exercise and appointment of a contractor to deliver the 2025 Culture Night programme including supporting marketing activity	May 2025 to September 2025	£150,000
UNESCO City of Music Activity	<p>Implementation of “Music Matters” Music Strategy. Deliver actions within the Music Strategy 4 strands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Theme 1: Place artists at the heart o Theme 2: Nurture the Sector o Theme 3: Ignite the IRL experience o Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO 	May 2025 to March 2026	£400,000
Networking	Support active participation in relevant local, regional and international cultural networks including but not limited to IETM, Eurocities, and other relevant international networks	April 2025 to March 2026	£10,000

Tourism and Events Workplan 2025 / 2026: Make Yourself At Home: Year 4 Action Plan

Project Name	Project Description	Timeline	Budget
Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Development Programme	Now in its 4 th year, the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Programme has significantly influenced Belfast's tourism industry and works towards positioning Belfast as a welcoming and inclusive for all visitors. The programme operates with strategic input from Visit Belfast, Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland, BCC, and the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance. The Tourism Team secured funding in 2024 / 2025 from external sources to deliver the strategic priorities of Council and has influenced stakeholder investment into Accessible and Inclusive Tourism.	April 2025 - March 2026	£45,000
Food and Drink Tourism Development Programme	Food and Drink play a pivotal role in shaping travel experiences, accounting for a third of total overnight visitor spending. The Food and Drink Tourism Network established in 2022 has been instrumental in driving industry growth.	April 2025 - March 2026	£60,000
Visitor Signage, Wayfinding, Street Dressing	During the past 20 years there has been an investment of over £3m in visitor interpretative signage and wayfinding in Belfast. A study of visitor signage is underway to examine a range of solutions, including digital options, that will ensure that the visitor signage is fit for purpose to provide wayfinding, interpretation and enhance the visitor experience in Belfast which also reflects the changing landscape of the city including 2 Royal Avenue, Cathedral Gardens and as Belfast Stories is established and other relevant visitor attractions.	April 2025 - March 2026	£26,000
Signage Upkeep	Upkeep, cleaning and maintenance of tourism signage network	April 2025 - March 2026	£50,000
Enhancing the Visitor Experience Priority Actions	A Visitor Experience Action Plan has been developed mapping out actions and priorities for enhancing the visitor experience across the city for the next 4 years.	April 2025 - March 2026	£36,000
Tourism General Management	Establishment of a Tourism Panel with city-wide commitment, as identified in <i>Make Yourself At Home</i> . The purpose of this Panel is to be outward-looking, horizon scanning, future proofing and to ensure benchmarking to inform future strategic tourism planning across city stakeholders, underpinning Council's position as a strategic leader in its gateway functionality.	April 2025- March 2026	£15,800
Business Tourism - Conference Subvention	Members will be aware that in January 2021 CGR agreed ongoing support for Conference Support in line with an updated criteria and support to ensure that Belfast can compete nationally and internationally to win conferences for Belfast in an everchanging marketplace. This fund is administered by Visit Belfast and match funded by our partner Tourism NI. The purpose of the fund is to ensure that Belfast, including ICC remains competitive as a business tourism destination.	April 2025- March 2026	£200,000
Neighbourhood Tourism Investment programme	The Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme aims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support to develop authentic and financially sustainable new tourism products, or enhancements to existing offers, which will bring vitality to neighbourhoods. • Promote enhanced visitor dwell time in the city and extend the economic benefits beyond the city centre. 	April 2025 - March 2026	£310,000

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Tourism baselines and measurement of tourism in Belfast and contribution to the NI Economy	The reporting of tourism statistics and meaningful visitor analysis at a local Council level continues to be impacted by the reduction in number of surveys and depth of detailed statistics by our national statistics agency NISRA, therefore it is important that Belfast can establish its own baselines and measure the social and economic impact of tourism to ensure that the contribution of Belfast to the NI economy is recognised and that ongoing investment in Belfast is secured. An audit of data available for Belfast and plans for future data collection has been undertaken by Council through engagement with key agencies including NISRA, NITA, Tourism NI and Visit Belfast. This has identified that gaps exist in data required to measure tourism in Belfast, therefore dedicated financial resource is essential to enable Belfast to measure all aspects of tourism impact (social/economic/ environmental) as we implement regenerative and sustainable tourism plans and strategies.	April 2025 - March 2026	£70,000
Sustainable Tourism: Global Destination Sustainability Index & Actions for Sustainable Tourism work including Green Tourism certification	Belfast completed its first index benchmarking and application in 2022, following which an application was made for 2024 which placed Belfast 9th out of 100 cities as a sustainable tourism destination under the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS Index). The GDS index is a third-party evaluation of the destination's environmental, social, supplier and destination management performance across 77 indicators assessing policies and infrastructure, destination management and sustainability performance amongst the tourism supply-chain.	April 2024- March 2026	£25,500
Visit Belfast	Visit Belfast leads on the tourism marketing activities and targets both the leisure and business tourism markets. It is a membership organisation with more than 460 partner businesses across the wider hospitality industry. Visit Belfast works on behalf of its funders and partners and with a range of public and private partners including Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland and Belfast Chamber to promote Belfast as a tourism destination.	April 2025- March 2026	£2,076,356
City Events	On an annual/biannual basis, the Council's City Events Unit delivers a series of large - scale public events, which are free to access by both citizens and visitors to the city, on behalf of Belfast City Council. The Tourism, Culture & Events also support a number of annual programmes and activities. Our cultural and tourism strategic priorities sets out long term recommendations for events in the city including better alignment across the Council in the design, delivery and funding of events.	April 2025 – March 2026	As detailed below.
Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival	Following a strategic review the Maritime Festival is now delivered on a biennial basis in order to grow ambition, budget and impact of the festival. Last delivered in 2023, the next edition is now due to take place in 2025. The festival will be delivered in partnership with Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Maritime Belfast Trust and Department for Communities.	April 2025 – November 2025	£217,000 (2024-25 budget also carried over into the 2025-26 year of event delivery)
Christmas	This will be a continuation of the agreed 'traditional' switch on format of the 2023 & 2024 Christmas event, with local community and creative sector content on a focal stage at City Hall.	July 2025 - December 2025	£152,864 £300,000

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	This programme will be supplemented by further city animation and lighting.		
St Patricks Day	The new model of commissioning the creative sector to deliver projects over this period will continue in 2025/206.	August 2025 -April 2026	£300,000
Lord Mayor's Day	This event will celebrate Belfast music offering on the same day as the Eurovision final event. This event is a day of family - friendly activity and animation focusing on City Hall, but with satellite activity at three other venues – 2 Royal Ave, the Oh Yeah Music centre and the Green House.	April 2025- June 2025	£45,500
International Events	Working with city partners to plan ahead for and develop /submit bids for international events that best align to strategic priorities and maximise legacy.	April 2025- March 2026	£40,000
City Animation and Events	Develop options for enhanced city animation and development of an Events Action Plan;	April 2025- March 2026	£200,000
Oireachtas	Belfast is set to host Oireachtas na Samhna, Ireland's oldest Irish language and arts festival, from October 29 to November 2, 2025. This event celebrates Irish language, arts, and traditions through a packed schedule of competitions, debates, film screenings, workshops, and awards, all conducted in Irish.	April 2025 – November 2025	£50,000
Fleadh Cheoil	Belfast has been successful in being awarded Fleadh Cheoil na Eireann in 2026 and will establish all necessary governance and delivery arrangements. Belfast also continues to participate in the Bid process to host it in 2027.	April 2025 - March 2026	Budgets to be finalised in line with OBC development
Small Grants Project Funding	Support for Sport grants to ensure development and delivery of community-based sporting events.	April 2025 - March 2026	£80,000