

ARTCAREER

Policy Report

Working as an Artist in the Regions of the Republic of Ireland Today



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By:

Dr Deirdre McQuillan, Technological University Dublin

Prof Elizabeth Keating, University of Texas at Austin



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Forward

The ARTCAREER project began with trying to understand the problem of how artists can build more sustainable careers. Talented artists that dedicate much of their working lives to studying and creating art often exist in virtual poverty or rely on the financial support of family to supplement professional careers. Indeed many give up altogether and their talents are lost to us. Art brings so much joy and wellbeing to communities and economies as a whole. It has felt to me over a number of years that I should use my business and academic expertise to develop something useful to understanding this problem. When I started this ARTCAREER project, I believed that if I could map out the career trajectories of artists I could develop models and exemplars of careers that would help artists think about more sustainable careers. I set out initially exploring synergies between the different income streams of artists and their art work.

I soon learned some things about the paradoxical world of the artist that had me adjusting my thinking. I learned that career trajectories of the professional artist cannot be understood over a short term of three or five years. Many artists move in and out of full time art work depending on their life situations. This is especially true for women who may take time out of art work when they have young children. Financial commitments also take artists away from art. I

also learned that the link between talent and income is a tenuous one. It is certainly not the assumption that the most financially successful artists are the most talented. I also learned that non-art work for one artist might be an extension of art for another. That has important implications for how art careers can be constructed. I learned also that time is the artists most precious resource.

Making sense out of these tensions and dynamics to create learning and workshop material for artists, to contribute new theoretical insights, and to support policy thinking took a lot of effort. I was grateful to meet Prof Elizabeth Keating along the way who was able to bring a more social and cultural foundation to the work and actually reflect on the language of the artists themselves. From my natural inclination as a business scholar to finding solutions to problems and boxing them off, the experience of wondering more in our research partnership and our many discussions led to much more considered and thoughtful outcomes.



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The approach of ARTCAREER was to focus on a section of artists in Irish society based in large regional towns. Such spaces can be highly creative with vibrant arts scene and arts centres yet they are under researched. Places like Drogheda are neither classified as City or Rural. They are not either recognised as international tourism hotspots getting recognition from researchers on tourism and culture. With the odd exception, artists in regional towns are neither rich nor famous.

ARTCAREER aims to make the working lives of artists in regional towns more visible and to create a range of outputs from evidence collected. The research shows how they construct their careers that runs counter to the common perception of art worlds, and yet these regional town artists are integrated into art worlds as they are large in number even if they are not the most visible.

A deep multi voice exploration of the working lives of artists cannot by definition cover the whole population of artists in Ireland, but it does give the freedom of artists in large regional towns to express their views in their own terms.

In more recent years, there is an increasing number of initiatives from government and their agencies to support artists and their art work directly. In this report, we have tried to use our findings to

reflect on aspects for policy reflection and advice drawn from perspectives of the artists in Irelands large regional towns.

Finally, thank you to Collette Farrell for taking such interest and for agreeing to sign up to this project idea from the outset. My funding from the Irish Research Council required this support and the Droichead Arts Centre was instrumental in helping to reach local artists and give credibility to the work. We learned through the project how artists often rely on very small closeknit groups to support their careers, or they feel very much alone. We also learned that there is a great interest among artists to have opportunities to come together. The evidence shows that arts centres such as Droichead are a linchpin for artists in Ireland's regional towns in terms of supporting careers and helping to bring people together.

Dr Deirdre McQuillan, Technological University Dublin

Section 1: Introduction

The arts are vital to Ireland's economy. A recent 2020 study carried out by Ernst & Young¹ suggests that the arts directly supports almost 55,000 jobs in Ireland and sustains wider supply chains of key industries such as tourism and computing. It is essential to regional development with jobs from the arts, entertainment and tourism industry representing between 8 – 18% of all jobs across every county in Ireland (CSO: 2019). The events industry, which overlaps with the arts sector but includes many non-arts activities, generates an estimated €3.5 billion for the Irish economy annually². Although it is significant on its own, the value of the arts cannot be judged solely on economic terms. The arts have a unique ability to bring people together, creating social cohesion and community domestically. Art influences health and wellbeing on many levels. Internationally, with Ireland's wide diaspora, the arts reinforces Ireland's reputation and attractiveness abroad, and contributes to a creative Ireland overall.

Despite the positive role the arts and artists have in Ireland, it is long recognised that artists in Ireland work in a pattern of insecure

¹ Ernst & Young (2020). Employment and Economic Impact Assessment of Covid-19 on the Arts Sector in Ireland. Available at: https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/Employment_and_Economic_Impact_Assessment_of_COVID-19_EY_Oct2020.pdf.

² Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce (2020). Life Worth Living The Report of the Arts and Culture Recovery Taskforce. Available at: https://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/All/Life-Worth-Living_-The-Report-of-the-Arts-and-Culture-Recovery-Taskforce/.

employment moving frequently between self-employment, PAYE employment and no employment at all. The characteristic portfolio careers of artists are well recognised in the academic literature. The artistic labour market is characterized by permanent excess supply³. In defence of persisting in such circumstances, there is a longstanding cultural narrative among artists to justify their marginal economic position⁴. It is common among artists to engage in multiple job holding as a means to supplement income which may be arts-related work (e.g. teaching for some) or unskilled 'between jobs' work⁵⁶. Greater casualization in more recent years suggests more 'portfolio careers'⁷⁸ are common among artists which facilitates the transfer of artistic skills to other domains. While this may allow the individual to apply creative skills in new and imaginative ways, it is unclear what and how synergies can exist between different forms of work and income streams.

Research in a variety of disciplines as well as formal policy statements have focused on the positive role professional artists play in building

³ Bille, Trine, Fjællegaard, Cecilie, Frey, Bruno, Steiner, Lasse (2013), "Happiness in the arts – International evidence on artists' job satisfaction", *Economic Letter* 121 (2013) 15 – 18.

⁴ Lloyd, R. (2010). *Neo-bohemia: Art and commerce in the postindustrial city*. New York, NY: Routledge.

⁵ Lingo, E. & Tepper, S.. (2013). Looking back, looking forward: arts-based careers and creative work. *Work and Occupations*, 40(4), 337–363.

⁶ Throsby, David, & Zednik, Anita (2011). Multiple job-holding and artistic careers: Some empirical evidence. *Cultural Trends*, 20(1), 9–24.

⁷ Throsby, David, & Zednik, Anita (2011). Multiple job-holding and artistic careers: Some empirical evidence. *Cultural Trends*, 20(1), 9–24.

⁸ Bridgstock, R. (2005), "Australian artists, starving and well-nourished: What can we learn from the prototypical protean career?", *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 14(3), pp. 40-48.

and sustaining communities, particularly the beneficial impact of the arts on local and national economies. In more recent years policy makers including national agencies such as the Arts Council has centred more on the working lives of artists and the focus of the artist in supports and funding. Yet the occupational lives of artists are rarely studied, **especially from the artists' points of view**. The ARTCAREER project is designed to explore and understand the artist's perspective in the Irish context. The emphasis on a qualitative research design combining semi-structured interviews with six regional focus groups provides deep insight into artists working lives in our large regional towns. ARTCAREER avoids the generalisations of more quantitative research approaches, preferring to emphasise a rich multi voice interpretation where informants are permitted the freedom to express their views in their own terms.

This ARTCAREER project is focused on exploring the experiences of working as an artist in the regions of Ireland. It aims to understand the multiple income streams that artists rely on to earn a living, how these are chosen, the interrelatedness of those multiple income streams, and the potential for synergies to be achieved between them. The project was started by Dr Deirdre McQuillan, senior researcher at Technological University Dublin in June 2021 supported by a grant from the Irish Research Council. The context for the Irish study focused on artists in large regional towns that traditionally have large

numbers of artists but are relatively neglected as research contexts compared to cities or tourism hot spots. Drogheda is the primary case of focus as a large regional town in Ireland, with further exploration in Dungarvan, Tralee, Ballina, Mullingar and Swords.

We report here on a study of artists where artists were asked specifically about financial sustainability and their experiences making a living as a professional artist. We describe artists' approaches and challenges to producing art, given the unique cultural and financial demands of this occupation. Our report suggests policy implications that respond to the particular findings from the artist narratives and their mutual requests.



This report has seven sections following the Introduction. In Section 2 the methodology for the ARTCAREER project is described.

Section 3 details the findings from the study illustrating the ARTCAREER Matrix, the characterising features of artists embedded within the matrix and tactics adopted by artists within each of the four matrix categories. Policy supports are suggested to accompany findings throughout the report.

In Section 4 we list the 'requests' to policy makers and government bodies from artists in the regions that were shared and gathered during six regional focus groups and workshops.

In Section 5 we reflect on similarities and differences between the Living and Working Conditions of Artists in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland survey of 2010 (LWCA) to connect the work to the last nationwide study of artist living conditions in Ireland.

In Section 6 we highlight areas of arts policy and strategy that were particularly relevant to our findings.

In Section 7 we challenge how we really identify professional artists in Ireland today drawing in archival sources but also discourses of professionalism among regional artists themselves.

The final Section 8 offers some concluding statements and recommendations for future study on the working lives of Irish artists.

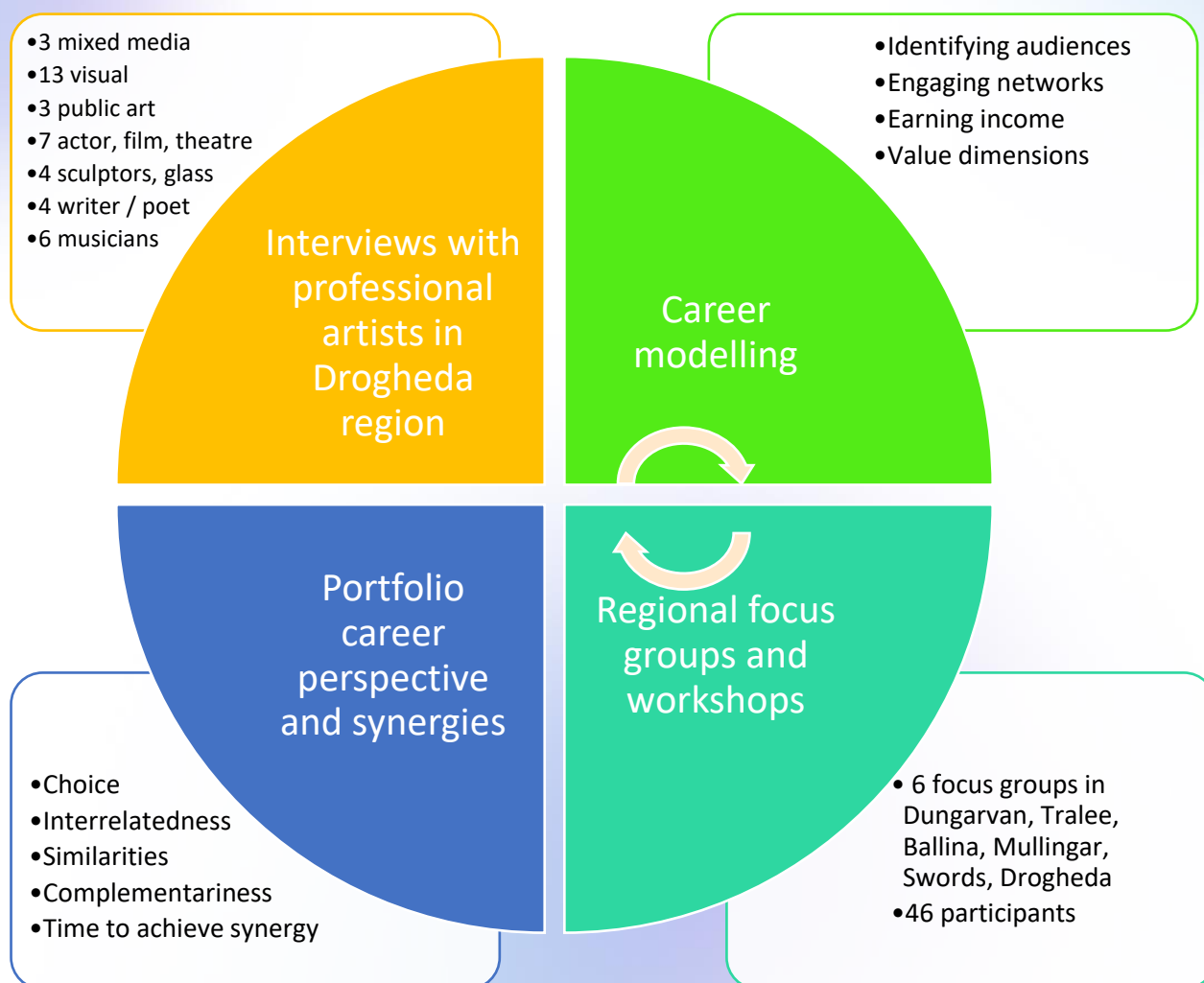


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Section 2: Methodology

The ARTCAREER project involved a multi-method study of professional artists from varying disciplines in the Republic of Ireland (Figure 1). Participants self-identified as professional artists and had mainly completed professional third level programmes within the arts or had demonstrable income streams and reputations from art work developed over some years.

Figure 1: ARTCAREER methodology



A multi-method qualitative approach was designed involving 40 semi-structured interviews with professional artists in the Drogheda region and 6 regional focus groups across Ireland. Drogheda was selected due to its position as a large regional town, perhaps lesser known as an international tourist hotspot relative to towns such as Kilkenny, Killarney or Sligo and outside of the cities in the Republic of Ireland. Drogheda is representative of numerous large regional towns in Ireland. Such locations have vibrant arts scenes and sizeable communities of artists that are supported by local Arts Centres.

However, such places are often neglected as research contexts because they are more difficult to categorise, not fitting neatly into profiles of city, rural, or tourism hotspots.

By focusing on a single region, Drogheda was treated as a single case study where working lives could be explored in an ethnographic way⁹ as an in-depth investigation of a specific, real life community from multiple perspectives in order to capture its complexity¹⁰. The research was underpinned by semi-structured interviews, complemented by archival data including policy documents, internet sites, social media and news, artist's art work, classroom engagements and workshop material. Multiple 'external expert' interviews and meetings were also held to provide the outsider perspective for a reality check¹¹. Fitting the purpose of the case study, it was decided to include multiple art disciplines among interviewees as typical of communities of professional artists in a regional community¹². Exploring across multiple disciplines also had the benefit of understanding tensions and similarities between disciplines that may be beneficial in developing recommendations and peer learning for artists themselves.

⁹ Stenhouse, L. (1985) Case Study Methods. In T. Husen and T.N. Postlethwaite (eds) *International Encyclopaedia of Education* (first edition). Oxford: Pergamon, pp 640-6.

¹⁰ Simons, H. (2009) *Case Study Research in Practice*. London: Sage.

¹¹ Santos, F. & Eisenhardt, K. (2009) Constructing Markets and Shaping Boundaries: Entrepreneurial Power in Nascent Fields. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52, 643-671.

¹² Robson, C. (2002) *Real World Research* (second edition). Oxford: Blackwell.

The interview prompt sheet draws on two important domains within the business strategy literature. Firstly, the business modelling and business model portfolio literature¹³¹⁴ that identifies the mental modelling process that managers use to understand and sense business opportunities. Baden Fuller and Mangematin identify specific sets of activities in business modelling as processes of identifying, engaging, monetising and value creation for customers¹⁵. Teece¹⁶ identifies the elements in business modelling of value creation and value capture that is also relevant to synergies¹⁷ and to the work of artists. The business model portfolio approach helps to explore portfolio careers of artists well recognised within the literature¹⁸. Most artists cannot rely on one income stream to live, but need to have multiple income streams that may have different degrees of interrelatedness to each other. The second theoretical domain informing the interviews draws on synergies within the strategy literature that enriches insights on the career portfolio approach. The constructs adapted from synergies explores similarities and complementariness¹⁹²⁰ of various income streams in a portfolio career

¹³ Baden-Fuller, C. & Mangematin, V. (2015). Business models and modelling. *Advances in Strategic Management*, Vol. 33. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing.

¹⁴ Sabatier, Valerie, Mangematin, Vincent, & Rousselle, Tristan (2010). From recipe to dinner: Business model portfolios in the European biopharmaceutical industry. *Long Range Planning*, 43(2–3), 431–447.

¹⁵ Baden-Fuller C, Mangematin V. Business models: A challenging agenda. *Strategic Organization*. 2013;11(4):418-427.

¹⁶ Teece DJ. Business Models, Business Strategy and Innovation. *Long Range Planning*. 2010;43(2/3):172-194.

¹⁷ Copeland, T. (1994), "Why value?", *McKinsey Quarterly*, Vol. 4, pp. 97-109.

¹⁸ Lingo, E. & Tepper, S.. (2013). Looking back, looking forward: arts-based careers and creative work. *Work and Occupations*, 40(4), 337–363.

¹⁹ Lewellen, W. G. 1971. A pure financial rationale for the conglomerate merger. *Journal of Finance*, 26: 521-537.

²⁰ Penrose, E. 1959. *The theory of the growth of the firm*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

as well as a time dimension²¹ that might facilitate synergies. By underpinning artist narratives and archival data to these theoretical constructs from business strategy, a case emerges in Drogheda that is strong in reality and a natural base for generalisation.

Data from artists working within the Drogheda region was collected between July and October 2021 through semi-structured interviews. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour 45 minutes with an average duration of 70 minutes and interviewees were balanced on gender. Other sources of data were collected continually from July 2021.

As a next step to explore and understand transferability of the findings, six focus groups were held across the Republic of Ireland within regions that were deemed similar in terms of the regional large towns and their surrounds with government funded Arts Centres as focal points for arts activities. Focus groups hold the unique position of approximating an understanding of communication in vivo, but in a laboratory setting²². The findings from the Drogheda interviews were analysed and developed into a set of workshop materials that was delivered in Dungarvan, Tralee, Ballina, Mullingar, Swords and

²¹ Angwin, D. (2004), "Speed in M&A integration: the first 100 days", *European Management Journal*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 418-430.

²² Krippendorff, K. (2004) *Content Analysis; an introduction to its methodology*. (2nd ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

Drogheda between February and May 2022 with focus group discussions embedded. Participants were asked to share their own narrative and reflect on the relevance of the Drogheda findings to their local experience making their own contributions.

Thematic analysis was undertaken on the Drogheda interviews triangulated by the archival data and validated in the regional focus groups. The focus group discussions were analysed phenomenologically to better understand the artists' lived experiences and the rich complexity of individual lives and choices. Visualizations the artists made as part of the workshops were a key part of gaining insight into the contexts of artists' lives in regional Ireland, and their reflections on their lives as artists as they daily experienced the challenges of sustaining the professional occupation of artist in Ireland today. Narrative analysis was also used to understand the role of personal and cultural meanings, such as identity and family roles, that influenced artists in their approach to sustaining themselves through art or planning an art career, and how the artists created coherence. These numerous sources of data and multiple approaches to analysis provides a means to understand working artists without diminishing or erasing the unique set of rich connections and experiences that make up a modern Irish life.

Section 3: Key findings from ARTCAREER

Summary and policy considerations from data

	Theme	Aspects for government supports
1	Professional artist careers can be broadly grouped into four categories – Cat#1 (See Saw); Cat#2 (Leap of faith); Cat#3 (Layering); Cat#4 (Entrepreneur)	Packaging supports need to consider different career trajectories of artists.
2	Low synergy across artist portfolio careers appears to be much more prevalent among women.	Low synergies implies higher levels of tension and fight for time. Specific policies for women should address this.
3	Most Cat#4 artists identify audiences for their art work, while few Cat#2 artists identify audiences.	Packaging supports need to consider different career trajectories of artists.
4	The local arts centre is key to helping artists engage with audiences and on average artists rely on a small number of network actors to help them engage with audiences.	Supports for local arts centres as intermediaries for artists and audiences. Support training to help artists to grow their audience engagement networks.
5	It is rare for artists to be able to earn a living wage from their art work alone.	Consideration for expanding basic income for artists' scheme and

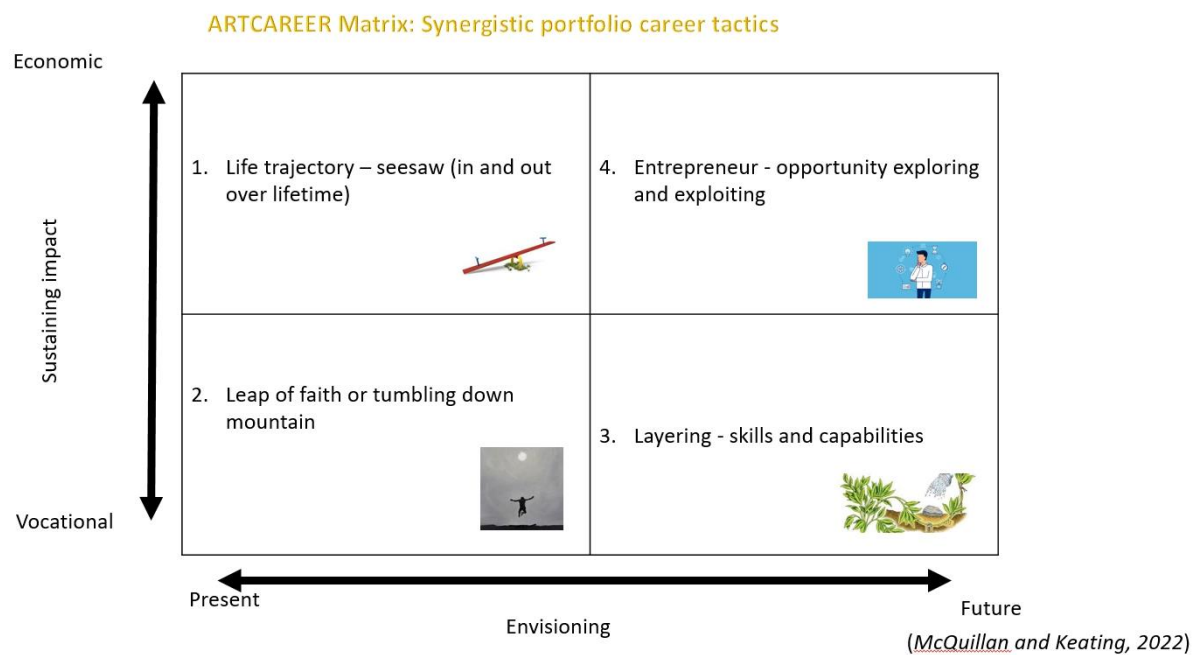
		<p>assistance to build portfolio of incomes after this.</p> <p>Support training on sustaining tactics.</p>
6	<p>A very small number of artists identify fair remuneration or monetary reward as valuable to them in their art work. These are mainly Cat#4 artists who are also much less likely to value audience appreciation and engagement. Only 10% of those same Cat#4 artists identify audience appreciation and engagement as a foremost value. About half of all artists suggest that what they value mostly from their art work is self-fulfilment from the process of creation.</p>	<p>Document what a sustainable career for an artist is.</p> <p>Tailor supports for categories of artists.</p>
7	<p>Learning statements are overwhelmingly encouraging towards living as an artist.</p>	<p>Important to share these and remind artists that art is important</p> <p>Support research on how to capture/characterize the non-economic “income” from making art and economic gain for other sectors from art.</p>
8	<p>There are five important tactics for professional artists to sustain their careers: housing, diarising time,</p>	<p>Tailor supports towards these tactics.</p>

protecting mind space, scaling income and engaging with peers.

Support development of dialectical thinking in artist career training to manage tactics.

The ARTCAREER Matrix

Figure 2: The ARTCAREER Matrix



Conceptual categories emerged from the analysis that are illustrated in Figure 2. This ARTCAREER matrix shows four broad dimensions that participants can be grouped into when interpreting their working lives and their individual narratives. Close attention was given to how the artists themselves created meaning and coherence out of their lives, including how they described their choices as well as their experiences

with unresolved challenges to successfully sustaining their art practice over the years. Based on the words and phrases the artists themselves used when talking about their careers, we found the artists showed a distinction between those who discussed their art career as a vocation (as a “calling” they couldn’t ignore despite negative economic consequences) and those who sought to create an economically sustainable life around something they had talent for and gained special fulfilment from. Another distinction that emerged from the artists’ words was a distinction in how they thought about their art in relation to those in the broader community, including those who appreciated their art (be it peer artists, art critics, the wider public, friends, family). This is best described as a distinction between on the one hand those who were future-focused, constantly looking for opportunities and on the other hand those who described focusing on the present and reacting in the present as key to sustaining themselves as an artist. Therefore, when interpreting career trajectories combined broadly with value and monetary aspects, participants are grouped according to the following dimensions. The first is a Sustaining Impact dimension that is either vocational or economic. The second dimension, concerning career trajectories combined broadly with elements of identifying audiences, engaging networks and synergies across multiple income streams, groups participants according to an Envisioning dimension. That is, either working in the ‘present’ or working with an eye on the ‘future’.

It is important to highlight that as this model reflects behaviours and interviews conducted at a particular time, individual artists are not fixed or pre-determined into one group or the other. Indeed a small number of artists when met on subsequent occasions were interpreted to have traversed from one dimension to the other (e.g. Participant #14 at time of interview was grouped in ARTCAREER category 1, but subsequent discussions one year later suggested he had evolved more towards ARTCAREER category 4 reducing pub work and focussing on building a portfolio of sustainable opportunities connected to his art). This suggests that the ARTCAREER model has captured not only some key aspects of artists' lives in Ireland, but also important effects of adjusting even small elements of their art career approach.

Sustaining impact

The sustaining impact of artists may trend towards more of a vocational dimension where money is not a motivating aspect in their art career. Many artists allude to how difficult it is to earn enough to live solely as an artist, but this does not always imply that they don't want or recognise a need to earn more. Indeed most artists are consigned to impoverished levels of survival²³

²³ Abbing, Hans (2011). Poverty and support for artists. In A handbook of cultural economics, Second Edition. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Some artists however suggest that money is not what sustains them in their career. One respondent tells us that “success to me. It's not making money from it. I have no realistic expectations from that.” while another suggests “It's not that I don't care what other people think, but I do [art] absolutely for my soul.”. Another participant suggests “not to get into it if it's money and fame that you're after, don't bother. It has to be something. That it's a vocation. I hate using words like that. It's something you feel compelled to do”.

At the other end of this continuum is the economic dimension where some artists recognise or are curtailed in their art by the money. Some artists recognise the need for business skills suggesting “you know, to be a professional artist, you have to be a marketer. You have to be a salesperson. You have to be your own finance director”. Some recognise that “art [for them] is a numbers game. The more people see your work. If 100 people see my work, maybe 5% will like it, 1% might think I'll buy something. Probably less than that, but just for simple numbers. So if 1000 people see my work, then 50 people will like it and maybe ten people will buy it.” Economics can also preclude artists from finding time for their art work resulting in them drifting in an out of art work over years, such as one informant highlighting how “every single day I think I must, have to do my art, I have to do my art, I have to do it. And even now, I'm working full time Monday to Friday night to five. And every day this is an injustice to myself.” While

another tells us how she had “three daughters. And so the two older ones were adults. And then the youngest was coming near. She was doing her leaving cert. And it was like as if I just started to think about what I really wanted to do.”

Indeed the economics of having children resulted in numerous of our women participants moving in and out of art careers over decades. Moving in and out of any profession is well-known to hamper recognition and opportunity.

Envisioning

The Envisioning continuum groups artists about whether they are identifying as artists in the present or looking towards the future. Those that are focused on the future are concerned with issues of learning with one participant suggesting “I'm still learning. I learned that I'm still learning, and I'm always going to learn.” These artists looked for future opportunities to learn or acquire additional skills in art. Or quite literally another participant suggesting how she asked herself “Where's music going now? Where's the technology going now?” in terms of progressing her art career. Some of the artists showed highly entrepreneurial tendencies of opportunity exploration and exploitation such as “If I see an opportunity for getting a gig out of something. I was, well I might as well get a gig. this will always be part of my role.”

Those that are grouped within the 'Present' category may express this as battling to find time to work on their art such as "I have [an exhibition] next year. So I want to see how my time can be balanced with creating a body work for that." Though this is a successful artist who has been invited to exhibit, her words indicate that her creative time is not something that can be easily imagined or forecast even on an annual time scale. Artists in this category might either have a consistent and developed style of working or an intentionally traditional approach to their art. One artist describes how "I was doing a river flowing. Just a grass bank and the rest is water. But over a period of an hour or two hours, I'm watching the way these patterns of wavers, or little whirly things you see in the water." The preferred style may not change for the artist who has a particular subject, theme or interest that provides a continuous inspiration to create.

ARTCAREER Matrix Categories

Depending on where artists are interpreted to be on the continuum of Sustaining Impact or Envisioning, four categories of artists emerge. No category is better or more optimal relative to others, but a set of tactics and decisions concerning housing, diarising time, protecting mindspace, scaling income and engaging with peers helps the artist to sustain their career within each category. These tactics that emerged

from the data formed the basis of the regional ARTCAREER Workshops delivered to artists across 6 Irish regions titled 'Planning your personal but sustainable career as a professional artist'. Artists very much connected with the combination of the ARTCAREER Matrix and the tactics in the workshops. For example:

"it's the first time actually somebody has come and first of all identified like that matrix is really interesting and even though I couldn't initially decide where am I now? I don't know but then I realized it didn't really matter where I was when I went through this process because it's the first time for a start that somebody has explicitly identified To me that professional artists, even though I know this in my head, theoretically the professional artists, it's not just about the diversity of practice, it's how you make your art work, what way you make your art, and the kind of equal validity of every type of approach. It was really interesting. It's very relatable. I think it's the most relatable I've ever seen at this type."
(Participant 20)

See-saw trajectory:

Where the Sustaining Impact is Economic and the Envisioning is Present.

We grouped artists according to a lifelong seesaw trajectory. Many artists fit this category where they may spend years or decades moving in and out of their art work. This may be because of financial constraints for example, or family care issues and responsibilities. The battle is constantly that 'art was always there'. These artists are not necessarily future looking in the evolution of their art but have the battle of wanting to create and practice what they presently know. The examples here are Jenny and Tom:

Ciara: "I kind of have two small children now. I haven't really made art for a few years. I've done some education work within art, but I haven't made my own work", or

Tom: "I probably always did have a liking for the poetry from a young age... So I admire any of the artists that went beyond and did do it. Because that was their passion. I didn't follow mine when I was young."

Leap of faith or tumbling down mountain:

Where the Sustaining Impact is Vocational and the Envisioning is Present.

There are two overriding narratives within this category, firstly the artist that always was an artist and was known as such and secondly the artist that experienced a life changing moment of clarity or an epiphany early in life that decided their life trajectory as an artist. The examples here are Mary and Colm:

Mary: "I used babysit her when she was about eleven, right. And I was about 16. And the first time her mother brought her to sign up for a casting agency. They asked me did I want to sign up as well? And the mam paid for me to do it. Okay. So from there, I auditioned"

Colm: "I met [another artist]. My sister brought me down to his studio. Of course when I walked in the smell of paint. I said this is it. This is where I want to be. I didn't know artist could be a job [until then]."

Layering skills and capabilities:

Where the Sustaining Impact is Vocational and the Envisioning is Future.

This category typifies artists that are constantly looking toward where they are going or where trends are going in terms of the evolution of their art and their forms of expression. This may be a progression towards new technology advances. The examples here are Joan and Pat.

Joan: "Where's music going now? Where's the technology going now? I could see that the digital aspect had changed. I was coming into it initially from a purely analogue perspective."

Pat: "I'm still learning. I learned that I'm still learning, and I'm always going to learn."

Artist entrepreneur

Where the Sustaining Impact is Economic and the Envisioning is Future.

This group fits most easily to our business understanding of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. Artists are continuously scanning the environment for new income generating opportunities within the boundaries of their art as they try to make a living as an artist. Notably the 'stress of the continuous hustle' that is voiced by many artists is more normalised by this group as embedded in their work activity. It is also notable the lack of tension between having to generate different interrelated income streams and create art. Whereas others are engaged in a constant battle to 'make time for their art'. Tom and Faith are the examples of artist entrepreneurs:

Tom: "So I perform at festivals and events around the country with different groups. And during that process I talked about there, there was a fellow who came along and gave workshops, [name], on making costumes.....Looks like cartoons on the street. ...I did a workshop with him. I thought that was cool. And then I started to facilitate some workshops with these costumes. Which was great."

Faith: "I have families, especially families of some of the elderly residents that I do the art therapy with would know about me. And then other people would have known from my work, some of the stuff I did with [published artwork] and a few things like that. I had a few jobs there, one in Tipperary. I travelled to do a mural

in a hall. I would keep in contact with them... And I find too, it's like any job really ... I always leave some of my cards behind."

Characterising features of art work for Drogheda artists

Most professional artists interviewed experience quite synergistic portfolio careers, but almost only women experienced low synergies.

From the artists that we interviewed most perceived either medium synergy between their various income streams or high synergy. Synergy is a widely understood concept that the whole of an entity is worth more than the sum of the parts. Components of what influences synergies, at least in economic terms, comprises both similarity and complementarity²⁴²⁵ of elements within an appropriate timeframe to have impact. Questions on similarities and complementarities as well as timing were asked during interviews concerning the different jobs and income streams comprising each participant's portfolio career.

Over 40% of participants suggested high synergy between their different income streams and a similar number had medium synergies. Only about one fifth of those interviewed experienced low similarities or complementariness across their portfolio careers.

²⁴ Penrose, E. 1959. The theory of the growth of the firm. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

²⁵ Porter, M. E. 1985. Competitive advantage: Creating and sustaining superior performance. New York: Free Press.

Importantly, these were almost all women with the exception of one artist. They are dominated within Cat#1, the see-saw career category.

Most Artist Entrepreneurs (Cat#4) identify audiences for their art work, while few Leap of Faith (Cat#2) artists identify audiences.

There are interesting differences between different categories of artists and how they identify audiences for their art. Audiences may also be described as participants, communities, customers or other such terms. Overall, just over one third of artists claim that they do not identify audiences for their art. This did not differentiate particularly between men and women. In the Leap of Faith category however (Cat#2) the majority of artists interviewed could not describe the process for identifying audiences for their art. About 40% of the Layering category (Cat#3) don't identify audiences, while just 10% of Cat#4 don't identify an audience.

The local arts centre is key to helping artists engage with audiences and on average artists rely on a small number network to help them engage with audiences.

For Drogheda artists interviewed the Droichead Arts Centre is one of the most important contacts to help them engage with audiences for their art. It was identified by over half of artists as part of the small group that formed their art engagement network. 'Other local artists'

were identified by a quarter of participants and 'social media' by about a third of participants to help them engage with audiences. On average the artists interviewed were able to identify 4-5 people or roles in their network that helped them to engage with audiences. This small number highlights how artists rely on very small and quite local networks for support. Family and friends were also mentioned by a number of artists. Indeed the artists were asked to identify 10 people that help the artist to engage with audiences and only one artist reached this number.

It is rare for artists to be able to earn a living wage from their art work alone.

One of the key findings from our study is how poorly paid artists in the regions are irrespective of their talent or success. It was surprising to us in the study how little connection between success and income seemed to exist, or indeed talent and income. A very small number (maybe 4-5) described a recurring income stream from their art work and a similar number from the artists interviewed were considered to have potential to be financially self-sufficient from their art work alone. Many artists described the stress of the 'hustle' to constantly seek out supplementary income streams to survive.

A very small number of artists identify fair remuneration or monetary reward as valuable to them in their work as an artist. These are mainly in Cat#4 (artist entrepreneurs) who are also much less likely to value audience appreciation and engagement. Only 10% of those same Cat#4 artists identify audience appreciation and engagement as the value. About half of artists suggest that what they value mostly from their art work is self-fulfilment from the process of creation.

There are interesting differences in what value means to artists from their art work. Only 7 artists mentioned fair remuneration issues in value drawing on economic value. Of course they may also value other aspects as well, but even mentioning the monetary reward was uncommon. 58% of men and 38% of women valued art as predominantly self-fulfilment from the creative process. 29% of men and 38% of women valued audience engagement and feedback. No Cat#1 or Cat#2 artists identified remuneration, but 40% of Cat#4 (artist entrepreneurs) did. Only 10% of Cat#4 identify audience appreciation and engagement as the value. This compares to 60% of Cat#3 and 50% of Cat#1.

Learning statements are overwhelmingly encouraging towards living as an artist

Differences across categories or gender were less evident from the final learning statements that artists shared at the conclusion of their interviews. Messages such as ‘be yourself’ and encouragement to persevere were common. A few suggested the importance of learning business skills. Very few negative statements were offered as final pieces of advice but there were a small number that suggested it was ‘too hard’ to work as an artist and some would try to deter others from taking that route.

Summary

1. Artists can be grouped according to four categories illustrated in the ARTCAREER Matrix.
2. Most professional artists have portfolio career synergy but women are most likely to have low synergy, stepping in and out of art over their working life.
3. There are particular features of how artists work within each of the ARTCAREER categories.
4. Five key tactics are identified that help artists to sustain their career that exist in each category



6.

Section 4: Requests to policy makers and art's bodies from the regions

In the regional focus group discussion participants often volunteered but were also encouraged to talk about their needs from 'the government', the 'Arts Council', their local arts centres. Those needs are grouped into 14 themes summarised in Table X. The description in the table of needs and challenges are the voices and experiences of individual or multiple artists participating in the ARTCAREER project. Suggestions are made by the researchers on aspects where supports could be developed to address the artist concerns.

Table X. Needs and challenges with government and agencies raised by regional artists

No	Theme	Description of needs and challenges	Possible government support
1	Need for mentoring programme and access to investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support on developing business skills - Support for developing artist skills and techniques - Support on 'meeting the right people' to invest or sell art. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fund mentor and mentee training on regional basis 2. Subsidise mentors regionally
2	Lack of preparation in college for the working life of the artist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No understanding of how to start career or develop career. - Little insight on the practical realities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Internships in local arts centres working directly with artists 2. Internships with those more on the so-called "craft", "design", "media" side who are making an income (so they can develop entrepreneurial skills)
3	Interest in 'Basic income for artists' pilot scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A lot of excitement about this. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Artists are hopeful for successful mainstreaming of BIA pilot research.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possibly should exclude high earning artists. - How are artists supported to develop new income streams when they emerge from the scheme? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Support for viable income pathways before scheme ends
4	Perception of imbalance between government staff costs and funds going to artists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to improve communication about value reducing what artists perceive as a disparity. - Funding for materials and exhibitions doesn't replace income. - Splitting and awarding small fractions of application amounts sought does not support working time of artists needed to complete projects. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand BIA fund after pilot. 2. Support for viable income pathways before scheme ends. 3. Emphasise accurately funded award applications rather than splitting awards. 4. Consider matching funds approaches with business or the public.
5	Feelings of exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some artists feel excluded from 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communicate pathways for

<p>from art centres, government bodies and agencies</p>	<p>access if they don't have formal third level training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sense that it is about 'playing a game'. - Some arts centres perceived to be more interested in national and international artists or narrow disciplinary fields of interest rather than local artists. - Perception that bureaucracy and 'blockages' excludes good artists. - Some artists are disaffected and have to divorce themselves from the system because they experience it to be dictatorial allocating too much funding for avant-garde work. 	<p>artists that don't have formal training to access structures.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Adopt universal design approach providing multiple options for engagement and interaction 3. More meetings and talking needed, but also ways to generate attendance at such forums. 4. Optimise technology as communication and support tool rather than transaction tool and barrier. 5. Reconsider needs and approaches to support very elderly artists. 6. Consider supporting training on strategising and sustaining art careers.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Art's Council 'business model' excludes elderly artist challenges (fear of rejection, health and illness, technology barriers) affecting some of Irelands most talented artists in their very late years. - Technology has become obstacle to meeting people and talking to them. 	
6	Need for studio and connection spaces in rural and regional Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Don't have the infrastructure that cities have in regional towns. - All counties need a specific hub where creativity can happen that is sustainable and utilised. - Artists want to have spaces to meet up and 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do assessment of gaps in studio space and accessibility to studios across counties. 2. Consideration of what models for studio space / hubs are sustainable and will be well utilised.

		also appropriate studio spaces.	
7	Need to learn about being a professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Artists 'nearly apologize for being artists'. - People don't want to pay for art. - Lack of stages of development and protections that would be typical in professions. - Artists use language of vocation a lot rather than profession. Term makes it difficult then to get people to pay a sum that would be commensurate with the effort/time of the artist. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Framework needed to understand 'professional artist' or 'professionalising' arts sector. 2. Need to create more meaningful discourse on professional artists and professionalising. 3. Also educate the broader public and businesses on professionalism in art.
8	What is sustainability for artists – lack of understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government policy needed to better understand what is sustainability for the artist – 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clarify what the government wants to encourage – commercialisation or reputation and align supports.

		<p>product or experience? For who? What amount? How should it evolve?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the value of the debate about making art for others or delving into creative process? 	
9	Connecting art to the market and to culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We don't have visual art history. "Our visual art history is linked to England". And so we're having to make our own identity. - Important that art is documented, advertised, spoken about as a legacy of Irish culture. - Disjoint between reputation/fame and artist income. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fund programmes and initiatives to document and archive regional art. 2. Awards for multidisciplinary expressing of local art and culture in regions to document and archive.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - investment needed in artists if they're seen as a valuable part of tourism and culture and other industries. - Should be more of a critical conversation about why art is important and its link to other cultural priorities and Ireland's healthy future 	
10	Perceived inequalities in support across art disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - very poor level of philosophy in Irish art. - The language and the people don't involve necessarily the arts except for music and film. - People do value Irish literature but the Irish art ship is lopsided in its focus on literature compared to fine art, sculpture, mixed 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Potential to develop disciplines of art in Ireland as contemporary phenomenon in multicultural Ireland, diaspora or global. 2. Aosdána equivalent initiative to support interpretative artists

		media, and so on.	
11	Stress of living in poverty or selling assets to live as an artist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lots of appreciation for PUP during covid with widespread recognition of this as a very creative time for many artists. Since then artists report very emotionally and economically difficult time selling assets (e.g. house) to keep practice going. - Rejections can cause artists to get despondent, stop working, and turn to substance abuse. Despondency was noted as issue for very elderly artists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fund mentoring programme - Support spaces and forums for meeting and talking among peers. - Promote and support mental health and wellbeing initiatives for artists, consider directed supports for different age groups. - Special supports and approaches for very elderly artists.
12	Use and restriction of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issues with private 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop protocol for inclusion in

	use of public spaces by private interests	exhibitors enforcing exclusion in public exhibition spaces	public space exhibition not only along the nine dimensions (e.g. gender, disability, etc.) but also pertaining to artistic expression.
13	Transparency in funding allocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perception of certain favoured groups and styles. - Repetition of the same stuff, doesn't seem to be anybody breaking in. - Problem with having to 'tailor your work to fit' and non-economic costs of this. - Delays in programmes of funding perceived as 'lack of respect' for the financial needs of artists. - Artists uncertain how to ask for feedback on rejections or to what extent 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communicate and invite more explicitly opportunity to get feedback from all award agencies and bodies. 2. Maybe rubric for transparency of evaluating if it doesn't exist. 3. Develop forum for anonymising artists' feedback about challenges or criticisms while ensuring the artists' criticism/ commentary is heard. 4. Creation of different types of awards or more targeted awards 5. Examine ways to reduce volatility, long delays and

		<p>they can get this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Power imbalance with fear to criticise or challenge feedback in case it goes against artist in next application. 	<p>uncertainty in funding allocations / artist payment schemes.</p>
14	Support with getting seen and visibility of artist work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arts Council good at national promotion and visibility, but need them to help promote local work. - Even if you pay for marketing, the market just gets so saturated with ads and advocacy messages these days. - Need ways to enhance credibility such as positioning established artists beside lesser known artists. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Embed local art visibility into national and international promotional forums. 2. Increase funding to local arts centres to visualise regional art. 3. Fund training and promotion and creating visibility through saturation in contemporary forums. 4. Research funding to create bank of case studies / seminars / toolbox for emerging artists to promote work and generate visibility.

Above we have shared artist discussions from the regional workshops. There was significant, if not unanimous, agreement among the artists on these issues during the group discussions. The artists were appreciative of what the art support institutions were doing, but saw areas where their experiences as artists could improve the outcomes of these government and agency supports. Our own review of public Arts strategy and policy, including the supports from the Arts Council and local bodies for artists, does, particularly in more recent years, appear to be sensitive to many of these attitudes and needs shared with us by the artists, and we highlight this in Section 6. To link the artists' experience with the goals of the support agencies, in that Section we link specific issues to some policy and support suggestions that might help influence more targeted and nuanced government funding and policy supports for artists living in regional towns and surrounding areas in the Republic of Ireland.

It is important to consult with artists about what they need and what they perceive and experience as their barriers and challenges. It is a suggestion that this format of discussion could be followed up periodically through surveys, focus groups or other research instruments.

Section 5: Reflections on LWCA 2010 study and now

Summary:

In 2010, according to the Living and Working Conditions of Artists in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (LWCA) the single largest need of artists was related to more funding or resources to support their arts practice. Some way behind was a second need, for more work opportunities, more demand for their work and more education of audiences on art form areas. Also identified in the earlier report were the not insignificant challenges of balancing different demands (including family demands) and maintaining a career as an artist, and the appropriate role of artists. These are certainly still important issues, particularly if artists are expected or expect to derive income from payment for their art alone. A lot of these same needs and challenges exist in the intervening years.

In developing this ARTCAREER Report we looked back on the LWCA Survey and other research pieces. There are of course differences and limitations of all research methods and the ARTCAREER project as a mixed method qualitative study emphasises depth through case study and regional focus group exploration in the Republic of Ireland.

The 2010 survey involved 895 artists surveyed in a standardized wide scale questionnaire across the island of Ireland.

Defining the target group for research into challenges artists in Ireland face today showed some similarity and difference between the earlier research and the current research.

LWCA identified artists as those who have worked in their principal art form(s) at some point in the past three years; those who view arts work as their main profession or career (even if not their main source of income), regardless of their current employment status; individuals working or pursuing work in art form areas supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon (Republic of Ireland), whether or not their specific work has been grant-aided; those normally resident in ROI or NI.

In the current study we found early on that an effort to utilize the three year definitional parameter in qualitative interviews with those identifying as professional artists needed to be revised. An artist's career is something that could only be understood as a lifelong trajectory which began with their first recognition of the importance

to the individual of viewing themselves as “an artist” and voluntarily participating in the study as “a professional artist”.

The definitional aspects of being a professional artist in Ireland are not trivial and we give this question more attention in Section 7 of this report. The issue in fact has implications for some of the culturally-based or larger systemic inequalities that negatively impact artists’ professional survival. The current study, following the mandates of the ethnographic and phenomenological approaches to methodology chosen for the study, which consider the research subjects’ experience and their own points of view as critical, preferred to follow the definitional guidelines of the artists themselves, and those who self-identified as professional artists.

The categories of artists in the LWCA report included: architecture; circus, street art and spectacle; crafts (only in NI); Dance; Film; literature; music (including opera), theatre/drama; visual arts. The categories of artists in the ARTCAREER study included painters, writers, graphic artists, film makers, musicians, mixed media artists, visual artists, actors, and sculptors. It is important to note that attention to definitions is critical since policy commitments may fall short if they utilize definitions that don’t regularly address grassroots definitional issues. Ignoring the dynamic aspect of definitions and

group identity terms could create a false picture of what a “successful artist” is and lead to misdiagnosing where funds should be infused for maximum achievement of community goals. This 2022 research can add specificity (specific action items) to the already identified target domains of previous reports.

Moonlighting or portfolio career:

The current study found that the term moonlighting, which was used in the 2010 report, does not accurately reflect the jobs that artists in the current study feel compelled to take in order to have a career making art. Although it is true that the supplementary jobs artists have to have were a second job, a portfolio career is a requirement for almost all artists. The example given by Oxford Languages for moonlighting is “working at a rival tabloid” which is an illustration of the usual relationship between a person’s first and second jobs as characterized by the term moonlighting. It’s commonly understood in the case of moonlighting that the person is not dependent on the income generated by moonlighting, but rather that their already adequate income levels are enhanced by working after hours. However, in the case of the artists, the job that was called ‘moonlighting’ in the 2010 report is a necessity, not a wage enhancement. Furthermore, the artists didn’t and still don’t necessarily moonlight in the same profession, that is, as any kind of

artist, but they may be pub workers, retail workers, labourers, and teachers. The term moonlighting is therefore misleading. In addition, the term has a negative connotation, including being perceived as slightly illegal or shadowy. The artists' interviews suggest that a term like 'survival' job or 'pay-the-mortgage-job' might be far more accurate and illustrative of the underlying problem. This very different feature of artists' need for a secondary job is related to the significant problem of finding time to actually do art.



Much is still the same:

One of the most important findings of the current study was how the prevalence of part time work other than art (a situation also reported in 2010) impacted the life of an artist. The necessity of artists working at a second job is a phenomenon reported across many countries, but the impact of this on art is not well understood. This qualitative study revealed not only that most artists had to take supplementary jobs, but details about the type of life this resulted in for them. The 2010 report does cite research on artists' working lives having "variable, fragmented and often unpredictable employment patterns" which allow flexibility but also "unpredictability of work and low financial security," including "limited workplace bargaining power; and employment insecurity and stress." This situation has not changed in the 12 years since the study. An additional area of stress the artists reported in interviews and focus groups in the current study was the stress of not being able to do their art.

The 2010 report invited the surveyed artists to make comments at the end of the survey and what emerged from these comments was similarly found in 2022. This included what in 2010 was reported as "the severe difficulties for many in surviving financially." Although the context in 2010 of this statement was "the context of an economic recession," in 2022 the context was the aftermath of the Covid

pandemic and had included some support payments during that period. The response of the artists to the Covid payments is echoed in one of the common comments from the 2010 report “appreciation of existing supports for artists,” since the pandemic payments enabled some artists for the first time to experience state support for art.

Yet the artists continue to report that it is “hard to make a living.” This was true even of artists who had achieved national and international recognition. Similar to the 2010 report, we found artists commenting still on “the challenge of balancing different demands (including trying to work as an artist and raise a family),” as well as “the appropriate role of artists in a society where material values are perceived as stronger than artistic values,” though this latter was more seen as a conundrum and identity marker, than a complaint.

The situation reported in the 2010 study, that “a sizeable proportion of artists spend (or have to spend) substantial periods of time away from their creative artistic work” is still an accurate picture.

The 2010 report suggests, as does the literature, that artists are more highly educated than the general population. What we found from the interviews and focus groups, however, was that even those who had left school at an early age to work, returned to study art at an art

college, so that art itself can be seen as a significant stimulus for gaining higher education among the group that calls itself professional artists.

The artists in 2022 reported a similar problem to 2010 in regards to unpaid work. The 2010 report has surprising figures for the amount of time artists reported doing unpaid work, with “all artists” in ROI reporting 51 percent of time on paid art and 49 percent of time on unpaid art. This was represented in our qualitative study not quantitatively but through descriptions of the difficulties of constantly doing voluntary art work in order to build the reputational value that might entitle the artist to opportunities to gain the public recognition necessary to either attract grants or to sell their work at prices that reflected the labour they spent producing it. Often the public and public agencies expected artists to do unpaid work.

In 2010, 82% of artists would choose again to be artists if they were starting over.

We found very similar comments from artists about their dedication to art in spite of the hardships. In 2010 one artist said about his choice of art as a career, “I could not help it. But I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy!”

The 2010 report attributes the difficulties of arts then partly to the economic conditions in Ireland, seeing “the severe financial problems many artists were facing in 2009 (and expecting in 2010) in the context of the economic recession, including lower funding for Arts Councils, fewer people consuming art, galleries being slow to pass on money for cash flow reasons, and some other reasons. In 2022 when artists were asked questions that entailed them reflecting on their long careers, they similarly reported significant difficulties living as an artist. The “the lack of financial return from their creative work,” was echoed in 2022.

Some new issues emerge:

The artists felt that though they were appreciative of grants and funding opportunities, the regional artists felt that the urban artists seemed to be the ones who continually succeeded at achieving funding, leaving the regional artists marginalized. Because of the increase of costs of real estate in the interim between 2010 and 2022, artists were struggling to find studio space, and struggling to pay rent and mortgages.

The need to become technologically more sophisticated in terms of promoting art was also a more recent issue that most artists struggled to address.

Many artists discussed the importance of being with other artists in some form of shared space in order to promote peer learning.

The 2010 report states that the artists felt that there were not sufficient opportunities to gain additional training, whereas among the artists interviewed the lack was more likely to be perceived as a difficulty taking time away from income producing in order to study art.

Not surprisingly, similar to the 2010 survey, technology was an important part of artists' lives, but the difference was that this was not only in order to produce art, but included promoting art through social media in addition to the type of technology referred to in the 2010 report. Facebook, twitter, and Instagram were mentioned, in addition to blog posts and web sites. Few artists were direct selling from web sites, though two that were reported good international sales.

Dedicated space for doing art was a concern mentioned in interviews in 2022. The high cost of housing and a dearth of affordable studio space was a frustrating obstacle.

Section 6: Overview of national policy and reflections from ARTCAREER

The importance of arts in regional and rural Ireland is now a priority for the government. In 2019, 68% of arts funding was spread across local authorities in 25 different counties outside of Dublin (EY, 2020).

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (The Department) acknowledges the importance of artists by influencing the development of the cultural industry through appropriate financial support for projects supporting the cultural infrastructure in Ireland. In its role of encouraging artistic expression, cultural awareness and participation, through an appropriate policy, as well as legislative and resource frameworks, it is heartening for artists and their communities over the last couple of years to see that living and working conditions of artists are being recognised and government agencies are giving regard to Irish artists' importance in the arts sector.

In particular:

The National Development Plan

The National Development Plan 2021 to 2040 emphasizes increased funding with a regional and rural focus in terms of investment in Cultural Regional Infrastructure, new and more flexible cultural spaces that allow for equality of access, better diversity, artist spaces, global opportunities, mentorship opportunities, a creative enterprise roadmap, network development for regional and rural artists, skills and capacity development of artists, cross border and green arts opportunities.

Summary of National Development Plan 2021 to 2040 for arts and artists:

	Reflections from ARTCAREER
Investment supports long term, sustainable economic growth that benefits every region, town and city across Ireland. Investment strategy supports spatial planning behind a shared set of strategic objectives for rural, regional and urban development.	Highlights the importance of studying artists in regional locations to give specific insights on regional and rural development where it surrounds large regional towns.
Government to deliver on a range of policies including Global Ireland and the Roadmap for the Creative Industries.	These are narrow and exclusive emphasising particular industries such as film and creative hubs such as New York and London. Need supports for

	regional artists to link in with these supports.
<p>Strategic investment priority – culture and arts: Support place-making through investment in Cultural Regional Infrastructure, with a focus on sustainable and energy efficient infrastructural investment</p>	Call from the regions for creative hubs and spaces including more inclusive use of public space for exhibiting and other forms of artist engagement.
<p><i>Invest in cultural regional infrastructure:</i> support the maintenance and development of an extensive network of regional arts infrastructure and provide funding to regional arts centres, theatres, regional museums, galleries, archives, multi-use facilities, artist studios etc. in all parts of Ireland. This investment has a very important role to play in improving access to and participation in arts and culture for communities across all parts of the country, in line with the policy objectives set out in Culture 2025. Investment programmes for cultural, linguistic and sporting infrastructure enhances the sustainability of towns and villages across the country.</p>	Emphasis on regional artists sheds light on career trajectories and issues for art work outside cities and art cities.
Wellbeing and cohesion: upgrading and providing new spaces where cultural, creative and artistic endeavours can be showcased and enjoyed	See above.

Looking to 2040: A more connected island: investment in diverse heritage, arts, culture, sports and community connections	See above

Creative Ireland Report

	Reflections from ARTCAREER
Social Welfare Scheme for Professional Artists on Jobseeker's Allowance - self-employed artists in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance for the first year they are out of work are able to focus on their artistic efforts, rather than having to participate in the normal labour market activation activities.	<p>There was significant enthusiasm on the 'Basic Income for Artists' scheme. This should be widened.</p> <p>In addition the research also shows that artists need support to stabilise their incomes once the scheme finishes for those lucky enough to be awarded it. What is the plan for supporting artists after the scheme finishes? And also broadening it?</p>
Arts wellbeing projects: artists deliver programmes of activity connecting hospitals, community, and public settings.	These investments are valuable supports to artists but many artists' work doesn't suit the profile of expectations. Integrity and authenticity of the artist needs to be preserved.

CPD for teachers (and artists working in partnership with teachers).
(Teacher/Artist Partnership – TAP)

Artist in Residency opportunities in which participating teachers and artists work collaborating during the following academic year.

Mixed response to this with some artists enjoying the experience and others finding it a distraction from working on their art. The integrity and authenticity of the artist needs to be preserved.

Global Ireland 2025

	Reflections from ARTCAREER
Culture Ireland Global Ireland. London / New York / Cultural Ambassadors.	How can artists in regional towns link in to benefit from this. Very little evidence of any knowledge of how to globalise income or art appreciation.
Fulbright Creative Ireland Fellowships	Interesting opportunity and aware of at least one artist in focus group very interested in this.

Arts Council – Making Great Art Work

	Reflections from ARTCAREER
1 Ensure artists are supported at key stages in the life cycle of their careers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of clarity about what sustaining a career as an artist means. 2. Many artists spoke about the idea that they were being

	<p>‘thrown off a cliff’ after finishing art college as they had no idea how to start their careers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Issues identified also for older artists, in particular very elderly that felt excluded. Also identified gender issues particular to women that need supports.
<p>2 Ensure a supportive working environment that addresses key points in the creative cycle by which art is made</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Need for more spaces to work in the regions. More inclusion in spaces to exhibit and perform.
<p>3 Advance the living and working conditions of artists</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Some artists suggested this had improved over recent years but very few still making a living as an artist. Portfolio career is the norm and low income overall, or reliance on the dole as the main income support.
<p>4 Recognise the value of international practice and relationships and support those who pursue such opportunities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Very few artists are engaged internationally or even know how to

	<p>widen their audience / income streams from global visibility.</p> <p>2. Lack of income is reported as a barrier to internationalisation (inability to attend international exhibitions, etc.)</p>
<p>5 Value and support artists working in a broad range of contexts</p>	<p>1. Aspects of exclusion evident from new artists / elderly artists / artists with disability / rural artists.</p>
<p>6 Promote and develop good practice in audience development and public engagement</p>	<p>1. A clear area for supports. Isolation is a common feature of an artist's work life. Networks that support audience engagement are small and unsophisticated.</p> <p>2. Lack of skills on social media engagement in a crowded environment.</p>
<p>7 Create opportunities for increased engagement in the arts by particular communities</p>	<p>1. Engagement with facilitators whether established peers, investors or others.</p>

8 Plan and provide for children and young people	1. Key to prepare young people for a career in the arts.
9 Champion and encourage amateur and voluntary practice	1. Not addressed in this study.
10 Make clear the principles and criteria that guide our investment strategy and inform our funding decisions	1. Many artists believe the funding process lacks transparency or is too exclusive. Need to promote more widely the rights of applicants to seek and receive feedback. Also formats for applying and feedback should be more universally designed to be inclusive.
11 Focus our investment on artistic activity	1. This is important as half of artists give priority value to the creating process
12 Establish funding agreements with organisations and partners	1. Not covered in this study.
13 Support the work of independent artists and incentivise experiment	1. Many artists value authenticity in their art so need to support in allowing originality. 2. Also recognition of activism and social impact of art work that motivates some artists in the regions.

14 Improve measurement of the outcomes of our investment	1. Need focus on sustaining. How can supports help to sustain artists.
15 Ensure our policy and strategy are informed by the national planning framework and by good spatial and demographic analysis	1. Insights for main regional towns and surrounding areas.
16 Develop our key strategic partnership with local government	1. Offers insights for artists living in regional towns.
17 Ensure investment in arts infrastructure is strategic and sustainable	1. Not covered in this study.
18 Advise and advocate to ensure that national, regional and local capital provision are co-ordinated and sustainable	1. Raises question about what is meant by sustainable in this instance and do artists understand and connect with it.
19 Ensure the Arts Council delivers this strategy expertly, effectively and efficiently	1. Feedback from the regions provided.
20 Ensure the Arts Council is active and inventive in its promotion of the arts	1. Feedback from the regions provided.
21 Ensure the arts sector is skilled, resourceful and committed to its own renewal	1. Policy suggestions here address this.

Making Great Art Work Three-year plan 2020–2022

There are still communities in Ireland where access to the arts continues to be a challenge. Barriers to participation in the arts include

geography, demography, socio-economic background, gender and disability. The new Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy aims over the coming years to bring about genuine change in these areas. Commitment to improving artists’ pay and conditions continues as a priority in this plan.

Ambitions for 2019 – 2022 for The Artist:

Objectives	Supporting actions	Reflections from ARTCAREER
Ensure artists are supported at key stages of their careers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a new advocacy and awareness programme that champions the unique role of the artist in a changing Irish society. 	Introduce awareness training for artists as well.
Ensure a supportive working environment that addresses key points in the creative cycle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a new professional development programme, in partnership with international, national and local agencies, to enable artists to advance their skills and develop their careers. 	Yes. Grounded in evidence relevant to artists and artist careers.
Improve the living and working conditions of artists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with artists to support work that is collaborative, cross disciplinary and open to evolving arts practice, both in nature and context. 	Yes. Artists that did this got a lot of inspiration and motivation from it.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the living and working conditions of all types of artists, whether performing or creative, based on the Arts Council’s policy on artists’ pay and conditions. • Work with local authorities and other partners to identify and provide the range of supports, including work spaces, that enable artists to sustain their careers. • Create opportunities nationally and internationally for resource sharing, peer support and learning support among artists. • Work with national and local agencies to ensure that the arts and artists are valued as part of social and economic development, and that artists benefit from opportunities to improve their business and enterprise skills. • Implement and monitor the Equality, Human Rights and Diversity (EHRD) Policy to support artists from a diverse range of backgrounds and to enable 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Support regional artists to work internationally and promote their work internationally.</p> <p>Artists recommend and call for this but needs artist specific content embedded for meaningful training.</p> <p>Exclusion elements identified in data from both interviews and focus groups – notably issues specific to women, support</p>
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	arts organisations to work with them.	for disabled, approaches to very elderly artists, support for new and emerging artists to access infrastructure and supports, mental health supports.
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Life Worth Living Report and Implementation Plan

Summary of 10 recommendations

	Reflections from ARTCAREER
The proposed mechanism for rolling out the Universal Basic Income (UBI) could be through the establishment of a pilot project as envisaged in the Programme for Government which would last three years.	Lots of positive reaction to this.
VAT Compensation Scheme	Insights in study to costs for artists and artist supplies
Enhancements to Existing Tax Legislation.	Most artists earn poverty incomes. Tax not really in the discussion, or only where partner incomes relied on.
The implementation of a Business Support Grant Scheme for the SMEs of the events sector.	Not covered in study.

<p>Sustaining Local Authority Capacity to Support Arts, Culture, Live Entertainment and Events.</p>	<p>Strong connection to regional and country arts centres supports this, in particular regional supports.</p>
<p>Ensuring wellbeing. Rollout Minding Creative Minds beyond music sector and bespoke supports.</p>	<p>Critique about providing piecemeal funding or division of funding that provides inadequate amount to any artist to complete work. Also transparency and exclusion issues come up for artists.</p>
<p>Capacity Building and Upskilling through upskilling funds and small capital grants dispersed regionally.</p>	<p>Many artists are highly skilled and have a natural desire to constantly learn more. Sustaining a career and earning an income is more prevalent issue.</p>
<p>Making Space for Arts & Live Entertainment to Contribute to National Recovery</p>	<p>Space and inclusiveness of space is issue in the regions.</p>
<p>Re-imagine outdoor public spaces. Creative Activation and Regional Project funds must focus on the delivery of infrastructure to support arts, culture, events and festivals including outdoor and indoor cultural spaces.</p>	<p>Inclusiveness in use of public space comes up for some artists.</p>
<p>A Creative Green Programme initiative for arts, culture, events and the AV sector in Ireland. Certification and workshops, etc.</p>	<p>Not specifically focused on in interviews but many artists have a passion for Green and activism as an important part of their</p>

	expression and authenticity.
The proposed mechanism for rolling out the Universal Basic Income (UBI) could be through the establishment of a pilot project as envisaged in the Programme for Government which would last three years.	Needs consideration for what expectations and capacity for earning income is after three years. Examples of projects dying after funding dries up.



8.

Section 7: Challenging how we really identify professional artists in Ireland today

Any study of occupations, whether artists or any other occupational group, faces the problem of how to define the occupational group or draw boundaries. In the case of professional artists this problem is magnified by certain unique characteristics of this occupational group, namely the fact that almost all artists have to supplement doing art with another income producing job, the fact that an art diploma is not required to be a professional artist (nor are there any professional qualifications needed), the fact that being an artist can cover so many different art forms, the fact that it's difficult to generate income from art. When we began analysing the data for this study, and even before that, the question of how to define an artist came immediately to the forefront in interesting and unexpected ways.

One way the complexities of defining 'professional artist' that became immediately apparent was that the artists themselves were unclear how to define this category, especially as it pertained to whether they self-identified as an artist or not. One of the most poignant stories we heard from an artist was the story about how her occupation was identified on her new-born child's birth certificate. Her husband filled out the form and stated her occupation as "art teacher." The new mother then insisted that her husband see that her occupation listed

on the certificate was changed to “artist.” This example shows not confusion about self-identification on the part of the artist, but on the part of a family member. The family member was clearly using a definitional parameter of “income producing occupation” while the artist herself did not consider income to be an essential part of characterizing her true occupation. The struggle to be recognized has important implications for the goal of the Irish government to better support artists in Ireland.

The artists who signed up for the focus groups in Mullingar, Ballina, Dungarvan, Tralee, Swords, Drogheda were asked when they signed up “are you currently working as an artist?” They could choose one of the following answers: “Yes I would identify myself as a professional artist”, “Yes I identify as an artist, but not sure if I am a 'professional artist'”, or “No”. The most common reply was the first, the individual identified themselves as a professional artist. Even those who didn’t identify as a professional artist had exhibited their art in exhibitions. And one who said “not” also wrote they were exhibiting with local art groups.

One factor that complicates definitions of who is an artist is that many artists cycle in and out of practicing art, usually because of the difficulties of supporting themselves and their families through art. For example, one film maker described taking a high paying job in a

global technology company for several years, but then deciding to change careers to make more time for art.

What definitional parameters would be a more inclusive way of describing members of this occupational community? Clearly, the income parameter is problematic, since it's well attested that most artists do not generate much income despite spending more hours on art than any other job they have, yet that is a common way of defining "professional." Formal training is also not applicable in all cases. This is an area that deserves more consideration. It is challenging to define artist today.

We notice that in previous policy reports individuals described as doing 'crafts' were typically excluded from the definition of artist. A bit of history might illustrate how this label is more historical artefact than representational of reality, and might benefit from re-examination. According to art historians, the powerful guild monopoly common from the 13th to the 15th century was characterized by a regulated training and daily routines. This was followed by a period where the artist "instead of being subjected to the regulated routine of a collective workshop, he was now often on his own and developed habits compatible with his freedom." As Wittkower (1961:297)²⁶

²⁶ Wittkower, R. (1961). Individualism in art and artists: A renaissance problem. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 22(3), 291-302.

writes, at an historical moment “a wedge between the arts and the crafts” emerged:

It is an undeniable achievement of Renaissance artists that they raised art from the level of a mechanical to that of an intellectual. By allying art to science, they drove a wedge between the arts and the crafts and, at the same time, rose in their own eyes and those of the world to the level of an elite. For the first time the artists were also capable of seeing their art as an act of self-expression. And although the modern concept of genius belongs to a later period, statements abound that artists are born.

From a distance, the transmission of knowledge, skill and ability may appear effortless. For the children of well-known artists, however, creativity is an intimate force shaping their lives. These children, observing their parents' relationship to their own work, come to see creativity as alternately joyful, challenging and painful.... "With the right combination of elements -- psychological, social and biological -- running in artists' families, there is a real possibility of sparking eminent creativity," said Ruth Richards, a psychologist and psychiatrist at the Saybrook Institute in San Francisco.

In Ireland, being from a family of artists was particularly important for women artists in the 18th century since the formal art school training

was limited to boys, “Thus until well into the middle of the next century women who made any professional mark were almost exclusively from families of artists. Like elsewhere in Western Europe, a family involvement in art was the only satisfactory way in which women could get a professional training” (Sighle Bhreathnach-Lynch and Julie Anne Stevens, *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century*, ed Janice Helland). It was not until 1893 that women could get training at the Royal Hibernian Academy, which had been founded 70 years earlier. Quotes from two of the women artists in the current study illustrate the continued importance of artists in previous generations of their own family to women pursuing a career in art.

Joan: My father is a musician. We were raised in that circle. But then dad didn't work for two years. So mam understands the precarious nature of the entertainment industry. So she wanted me to just go and get a civil service job, you know for good reasons. Because she's been on the receiving end of not having a brass farthing, then being loaded and then not. And then so it's very up and down. And so she didn't want that for me. But look, I wish I had someone else's career and it had all gone

brilliantly and I was making a fortune and still doing what I wanted to do.

Sinead: My sister is an artist. And she graduated from NCAD as well. My father is an artist.

These examples run across many interviews a number of participants highlighting how even when they did not encourage their children to study art or work in the arts, art was still chosen as their preferred profession.

A final aspect of this section on challenging how we (the community and the public) really identify professional artists in Ireland today in accepting as unproblematic the expectation that artists volunteer their time and donate their art in order to foster community involvement with art and artists. The artists in the current study made us aware, through numerous specific examples, of the extent to which they are expected to contribute in uncompensated and frequently unrecognized ways to the success of community. Reports do show that over the last few years policy makers and government agencies have confronted this challenge more proactively. They have a role to continue to make the volunteer contribution of artists more transparently obvious, in order to create awareness of the

artists' efforts and to better prevent exploitation. In a similar example of artists' uncompensated contribution to communities taken from the US context, the existence of a community of artists is well known to increase the value of US real estate for non-artists who value the creative and material expressions of artists. This ironically and sadly can result in the artists being priced out of the communities they've worked to establish.



9.

Section 8: Concluding remarks and recommendations for action

Throughout this Policy Report we have highlighted within the evidence gathered from artists how supports from the government might be considered. We have also reflected from the overview of national policies aspects that artists have told us are relevant. That analysis can help in more targeted initiatives and also to recognise areas where supports might be missing or could be strengthened. Helping the various government departments that support artists and the Arts Council by providing this evidence is fundamentally the purpose of this Policy Report.

We have also used our work to develop training opportunities and workshops for artists that is grounded in their lived experiences and complemented by elements from entrepreneurship and business education. By starting with the lived experiences to develop this material we have gained good insight into aspects of relevance and adaptability of traditional enterprise and career management concepts and tools. The feedback from this approach in our workshops with artists in the regions has been very positive.

From our review we can see how policies and supports for artists have been better directed in more recent years towards their lived experiences. In this respect our research is a confirmation of the necessity for this given the importance of artists to our culture and to the wider economy, and also their role in supporting many other industries, sectors and communities.

ARTCAREER as a research and educational development project has been a thoroughly enjoyable and insightful experience for the researchers. It has helped us to question and interrogate our many years of beliefs about artists and norms grounded in our respective fields of business and linguistic anthropology. It has opened our eyes to the lives and experiences of artists and how we can understand better and learn from artists in order to be prepared for the future of work.

About the authors:

Dr Deirdre McQuillan



Deirdre McQuillan is a senior researcher at Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin). She is currently a project team lead on the European University of Technology (EUt+) initiative. She leads on the work on inclusiveness and embeddedness across the European alliance. Prior to this she was head of research at TU Dublin's College of Business and she also lectures in strategy and entrepreneurship. Deirdre's research interests are in creative industry strategic contexts and international entrepreneurship. In 2020 she led on a European funded project on improving management development standards in SMEs in Ireland for the benefit of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. This ARTCAREER project emerges from a longstanding interest to support artists and in particular using her expertise in research and education to explore, understand and inform artists towards more sustainable careers. In addition to her policy work, Deirdre has published in leading academic journals on creative industries and international entrepreneurship.

Prof Elizabeth Keating



Elizabeth Keating is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin USA and a faculty member of the Human Dimensions of Organizations Program. In 2022 she was a Fulbright Scholar in the College of Business at the Technological University of Dublin. She has published three books and over 50 articles in academic journals, and given academic talks in 15 countries. She's on the editorial board of four academic journals and a past editor of the Journal of Linguistic Anthropology. Her research interests include societal impacts of technology, visual and multimodal communication, virtual work groups, communication in organizations, narrative, and expressive culture, and she's conducted research in Micronesia, Romania, Brazil, India, the U.S. and Ireland. She received her B.A. at the University of California Berkeley and her PhD at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA).

Images:

- Cover Image: Borrowed Ground, 2019
Droichead Arts Centre
- Image 2. Dee Walsh, Connections, 2020
Droichead Arts Centre
- Image 3. Caoimhe McCarthy, Connections, 2020
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- Image 4. Olga Duka Notebook, Connections, 2020
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- Image 5. Breda Marron, Borrowed Ground, 2019
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- Image 6. Borrowed Ground Workspace, 2019
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- Image 7. Quintessence Theatre Company, 2020
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- Image 8. Drawda Outreach Schools Programme, 2022
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- Image 9. Rodney Thornton, Borrowed Ground, 2019
Droichead Arts Centre