

Cork City Council Arts Office Travel & Mobility Awards

Background

Following the success of Cork as European Capital of Culture 2005, the City Council's 3rd Arts Plan, *Arts & Cultural Strategy 2006 – 2009*, set out four cross-cultural strategies to inform policy and programmes. 'International City' was one of the four strategies: *"as a city located on the edge of Europe, we are very conscious of the ongoing need to create circumstances where international projects and partnerships can be supported. We are a port city and as such are used to trade. We must now trade in art and culture."* To achieve this strategic objective, a new fund was created for research and travel – the Cork City Council Arts Office Travel and Mobility Awards. Mobility awards were offered in 2006, 2007 & 2008. The annual budget is 7 000 EUR with a maximum grant of 1 500 EUR.

The awards scheme supports the development of international opportunities for arts and cultural practitioners in Cork, towards any activity that:

- promotes Cork's artistic and cultural profile abroad;
- develops international networking opportunities;
- develops partnership initiatives with counterparts abroad; and
- brings an international learning perspective back to Cork City.

How it works

Grants can cover travel and accommodation costs and are available for both outgoing and incoming mobility, as long as the objectives above are met. Applications must be received by the deadline and at least six weeks prior to travel. The application form is straightforward; in addition, applicants must provide evidence of artistic track record and quality (CVs and examples of previous work), a letter of invitation, outline of proposed evaluation and evidence of costs. They must demonstrate efforts to secure income from other sources. Grants are paid in two instalments: 50% before travel and 50% on receipt of a full report.

Although the Arts & Cultural Strategy specified that the new mobility awards should be available for application on an ongoing basis throughout the year, this proved to be difficult to manage, with the limited budget. In 2006 there were two deadlines but in 2007 & 2008, there has been an annual application process with one deadline.

The scheme is open to professional artists, curators, coordinators, administrators and managers who are developing or delivering arts projects. There are no geographical limitations for the countries applicants may travel to.

Applicants must be located in or provide services within Cork City Council's administrative area. The selection criteria are stated clearly on the application form and fall into general areas, artistic, strategic and operational. They were drawn up following a consultation report in 2004 which devised appropriate criteria for the various new schemes in the Arts Plan.

The scheme is open to both outgoing and incoming mobility, as long as the benefit is within the Cork City Council area. In practice, no applications have been received from abroad. Some grants have been made to Cork-based organisations to bring in partners from other countries but most of the mobility grants have been directed to outgoing mobility.

Results

Analysis of the application data, numbers of applications and breakdown by art form, destination, mobility purpose etc. is just beginning. The Arts Office will draw together this information as part of the evaluation process of the scheme in advance of the development of the new Arts Plan for 2010 onwards.

As part of the planned evaluation of all new funding schemes, public presentations will take place, with case studies by some of the artists who took part in the scheme. Cork City Council also plans to engage in a series of workshops led both by international cultural thinkers and by individual leaders from the local cultural community. This will take place over the next year (September 2008 – September 2009). Anecdotal evidence from the Arts Office indicates that the scheme has been very positive, is widely used by the local community and acknowledged by beneficiaries to be a success.

No other local authority mobility awards are known of in Ireland. The Cork City scheme complements mobility grants available on a national level through the Arts Council of Ireland's Travel & Training Awards – these are open to individuals and organisations, have wider scope for eligible costs and a maximum award of 12 000 EUR. Grants for presentation and promotion of Irish arts internationally are available from Culture Ireland which also offers 'See Here' grants for Irish artists and organisations to invite programmers, presenters, curators, critics etc. from abroad to view new Irish work with a view to presenting it internationally. The Cork City Arts Office has directed people to these schemes where appropriate and notes that they sometimes provide matching funding.

The Cork City Council Travel and Mobility Awards are a tangible outcome of Cork European City of Culture. They demonstrate growth in the confidence and stature of the city as 'International City' and recognition of the value of arts and culture as the 'new trade'. Although the evaluation of the scheme is only just beginning, the planned process for 2008/09 which involves analysis of data alongside public presentations and debates is a fresh, positive approach. It is an interesting example of how a local authority can bring international cultural mobility experiences to public attention and aim to secure support and understanding of their wider value.

Sources

Application guidelines

http://www.corkcity.ie/ourservices/recreationamenityculture/arts/availablefunding/travel_and_mobility_20082.pdf

Arts Office, Cork City Council

<http://www.corkcity.ie/ourservices/recreationamenityculture/arts/>

Cork City Council Arts & Cultural Strategy 2006 – 2009

<http://www.corkcity.ie/ourservices/recreationamenityculture/arts/theartsandculturalstrategy2006-2009/filedownload,3701,en.pdf>

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