

**Application seeking support from Belfast City Council for
The MAC
Belfast's arts centre in the heart of the City**

1. Background

- Belfast City Council has played a crucial and leading role in the development of The MAC. In 1996, the Council, in partnership with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI), commissioned Boyden Southwood to undertake a Review of Performing Arts Venues and Spaces in Belfast. Subsequently, the Arts Sub-Committee met with ACNI in November 1997 and agreed that the recommendations of the Review should be adopted.
- The Review recommended that a major city centre arts centre for Belfast be developed either through the amalgamation of the Old Museum Arts Centre and the Crescent Arts Centre or by another route, while attempting to preserve the maximum extent of existing uses. (The Crescent Arts Centre declined to relocate to the Cathedral Quarter – the Council's and ACNI's preferred location for the venue.)
- The report also recommended that a mid-scale receiving performance space should be developed for the city. The creation of this space was considered to be of such importance for the city that Council made this one of its strategic priorities.

The MAC will meet both these needs.

2. The MAC

- The MAC is a very large, extremely ambitious project in the Cathedral Quarter in Belfast's city centre.
- Following on from the Council's early and crucial support for the project, OMAC has secured cross-departmental support from DCAL, DSD and ACNI for The MAC. DCAL has stated that The MAC is its No. 1 priority capital arts project and this is reflected in the level of the department's investment.
- There will be no other venue in the UK or mainland Europe like The MAC in terms of its balance between community-based work and the performing and visual arts. Its uniqueness represents an entirely new level of ambition for Belfast in terms of what it can deliver for its citizens

and visitors. It will make a significant contribution to Belfast's tourism targets and will put the city on the European cultural map.

- The MAC is bigger in cost and scale than any other capital arts development project in Belfast currently ongoing or in recent years including the rebuilt Lyric theatre.
- The MAC will be located beside the University of Ulster's Belfast Campus which will teach 10,000 students each year following its development plans.
- The MAC will be six floors high and will comprise 5,500sqm (the equivalent of 55 three-bedroom semi-detached houses).
- The MAC is due to open in early 2011.
- The MAC will be more than 8 times bigger than OMAC in physical terms and the breadth and scope of The MAC's programmes will dwarf OMAC's current activities. It will have a major regenerative impact on Belfast and the most recent business modelling projects annual attendance figures of 280,000 per annum.
- The MAC will do completely different things from other venues. The Lyric is a producing theatre – The MAC will be the home of Northern Ireland's independent theatre companies. The Opera House is large scale – The MAC's mid-scale performing space will give audiences choices they don't currently have.
- OMAC has been the single arts organisation that has been part of all the attempts to deliver on the Council's aspiration for a shared cultural space in the city centre that meets the needs of a broad and inclusive representation of the city's inhabitants.

3. The MAC's Work

The MAC's 3 main programmes will be community engagement, live events and visual arts.

Community Engagement

- OMAC has an unrivalled track record in community engagement through our work at community level in **ALL areas of Belfast**. In a recent independent study commissioned by the Council OMAC scored an 'A' rating in relation to the quality of our work and in terms of how we meet our own and the Council's stated objectives. Please refer to the attached document *Appendix 1 OMAC Community Engagement Programme* for further details of our work in this area. This document demonstrates

OMAC's reach in this area despite our relatively small size. In The MAC our ability to expand and develop the number of communities we work with will increase significantly.

- The MAC's community engagement programmes will include 20,000 participants per annum.

Visual Art

- The MAC will include **1000sqm of visual art galleries** making it the venue that delivers Belfast City Council's and ACNI's shared aspiration to develop a flagship contemporary art gallery in the city centre. ACNI has stated that The MAC is its No. 1 priority visual arts project and the strategic importance of the project is reflected in the level of ACNI's investment.
- The MAC will be the largest, most significant, purpose-built visual art space to be built in Ireland in generations – all in Belfast's city centre.
- The MAC's visual art galleries will attract 55,000 visitors per annum.

Live Events

- The MAC will include **2 performance spaces** (one 350-seat and one 120-seat). We will present the work of local playwrights, theatre companies, dancers, musicians and comics as well as a mixed and balanced programme of the best the rest of the world has to offer.
- The Mac will also include **education and workshop rooms, rehearsal and dance studios** and a café, bar and retail unit as well as offices for The MAC staff and residents arts groups.
- The MAC's galleries will attract 64,000 audience members per annum.

4. Financial Information

4.1 Capital Cost

- The most up to date Stage E cost estimate published by OMAC's Integrated Design Team estimates the project's global cost as £17,771,627. Please refer to Appendix 2 attached *The MAC Global Cost Plan Summary* for a detailed breakdown on this figure.
- Following ACNI, DCAL and DSD investment this leaves a shortfall of £2,211,627. Investment from Belfast City Council in the order of 25% of the shortfall equals £552,906. OMAC has raised £630,000 from a number

of sources and we are continuing to implement our agreed fundraising strategy. Please refer to attached document *Appendix 3 Fundraising Strategy Update* for detail on how the remaining shortfall will be addressed.

Capital Costs breakdown	£
Total Project Cost	17,771,627
Department of Culture Arts and Leisure	10,760,000
Arts Council of Northern Ireland Lottery	4,250,000
Laganside/DSD	550,000
Shortfall	2,211,627
Requested BCC support (25% of shortfall)	552,906
OMAC fundraising to date	630,000
Remaining fundraising target	1,028,721

- The relatively high level of public funds invested in The MAC reflects its scale and cross-departmental strategic importance.
- OMAC must have raised 95% of the total project costs (£16,883,045) before entering into contract with the project's preferred building contractor in order to allow construction to begin in April 2009. Investment from Belfast City council as above increases the funds raised to £16,742,906. If the modest shortfall remaining (£140,139) is not met as a result of our active funding applications which are currently under consideration we will remove these costs through value engineering. In other words, the requested investment from Belfast City Council is critical to the ongoing progress of the project.

Appendix 1

OMAC Community Engagement Programme

During the last 18 months, OMAC has actively and meaningfully engaged with over 70 cultural and community organisations throughout Belfast in the delivery of our Community Engagement programme strand. This strand is central to OMAC's commitment to access and equality of opportunity which has always been a core part of our work – OMAC delivered a far-reaching education programme long before other organisations.

OMAC's Community Engagement programme is continuing to provide high quality arts projects for schools and youth and community groups in the most socially and economically depressed areas of Belfast. OMAC acts as a bridge between the professional and community arts sectors targeting individuals and groups that have previously been excluded from arts participation due to social and economic inequality. The programme explores issue-based arts and cultural activities through five main strands.

- Community Involvement
- New Generations
- Professional Development
- Artitude
- All Audiences

These strands challenge and motivate participants through individual and community empowerment and will aim to engage with new participants and support groups throughout Belfast. The four strands also run alongside and support OMAC's programme of live events.

Our Community Engagement programme is mainly comprised of long-term, developmental arts-based projects facilitated by professional practitioners from a variety of disciplines and using a range of different media. These projects are often designed in close consultation with participant groups as a way of ensuring that they are accessible while at the same time providing tangible outcomes for the target participants.

OMAC is a neutral organisation which has an established reputation for working successfully with youth and community groups from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds

Community Groups we have worked with in the last 18 months:

An Droichead

New Lodge Arts

Impact training – Shankill

Shankill Alternatives

The Vine Centre

UNB CEP - Upper North Belfast Community Empowerment Partnership

NB CEP – North Belfast CEP

New Lodge CEP

Corner House Community Centre
Falls Community Council
174 Community Centre
Newington Community Association
Ballymacarret Community Centre
Artillery Youth Centre
Mount Vernon
St Teresa's Community Centre
Mornington Community Centre
Donegal Pass Community Centre
Beechmount , Blackie Centre
Chinese Welfare Association
Ashton Centre
New Lodge Youth club
Springboard's Opportunities programme
Age Concern Belfast's Get Active group
Ballymac youth
New lodge Bytes
Ballynafeigh Community Development Association

Youth Organisations we have worked with in the last 18 months:

Northern Ireland Youth Forum, participation Hub
Youth Action
Rainbow Factory

Arts Organisations we have worked with in the last 18 months:

Amps Studios
Studio On
Cinemagic
Belfast Exposed
Belfast Print Workshop
Maiden Voyage Dance Company
YDance Company
Fresh Mess Dance Company
Robert Hylton Urban Classicism
Dance Ireland
Young at Art
Belfast Festival at Queen's
Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival
Community Arts Forum
The Motion Project
Belfast Circus
The Beat Initiative
Art works for All

Education orgs we have worked with in the last 18 months:

Belfast Education and Library board
South Eastern Education and Library Board
St Louise's Comprehensive College
Lagan Integrated College
St Genevieve's College
Hazelwood Integrated College
Little Flower Girls Schools
Dominican College
St Dominic's College
Ashfield Girls High School
Hazelwood Integrated College
Ulidia College
Boys Model School
Victoria College
BIFHE
Ballyclare High School

NGO's we have worked with in the last 18 months:

Trocaire
Save the Children
Oxfam
Development Awareness Fund

Artists we have worked with in the last 18 months:

Damian Gorman – Playwright
Zhenia Mahdi-nau – Digital Media Artist
Guy Masterson – Actor
Francis Gunn – Actor, storyteller, writer
Rose Chu, Theo Alade - Dance
Alan Irvine - Dance
Andrew L Harwood – Dance
Noemi Lapzeson – Dance
Andrew Howitt – Dance

Gallery talks

Duncan Ross - Visual Artist
Colin Williams - Visual Artist
Roisin Lewis - Visual Artist
Gary Shaw - Visual Artist
Mark McGarry - Visual Artist
Fiona Larkin - Visual Artist
Anna Boyle - Visual Artist
Cian Donnelly - Visual Artist
Allan Hughes - Visual Artist
Benjamin de Burca - Visual Artist

Brendan O'Neill - Visual Artist
Gerry Devlin - Visual Artist
Will Pollard - Visual Artist

Theatre Companies we have worked with in the last 18 months:

Bruiser Theatre Company
Replay Productions
Kabosh Theatre
Prime Cut Productions
Tiger Theatre Company
Big Telly Theatre Company
Red Ladder Theatre Company
Those Who Can't
Ransom Productions