

A CITY IMAGINING

Belfast

Cultural Strategy for
Belfast 2020 - 2030

Draft

**Our approach to
investing in
culture in Belfast**

The context

A City Imagining

A City Imagining, the city's draft cultural strategy 2020-30, has been developed in partnership with the people of Belfast and places culture and creativity at the heart of civic development. Outward-looking, forward-facing, innovative and inclusive, it recognises the impact culture has on:

- Cohesion and permeability
- Identity and confidence
- Attracting investment
- Retaining talent

There are four themes within the draft strategy:

- 1. A City Belonging** (active participation): Priorities under this theme will support citizens to be active agents of change and co-creators of cultural activity.
- 2. A City Challenging** (diversity): Priorities under this theme will aspire to cultivate creative environments for dynamic co-creation and synergy in our place-making.
- 3. A City Creating** (new approaches): Priorities under this theme will facilitate and explore new ways of working, taking more risks and helping artists to have more autonomy to engage with citizens in new and creative ways.
- 4. A City Exploring** (our place in the world): Priorities under this theme will sustain and strengthen the city's cultural ecosystem.

The draft strategy also identifies a number of strategic, milestone projects including At Home in 2023, the Destination Hub, UNESCO City of Music and a new approach to events and festivals.

To support the delivery of *A City Imagining*, the Council is developing cross-cutting implementation plans, a communications plan, an evaluation framework and an investment model.

The Investment Model

"This investment approach takes the long view required to deliver transformation for the city. It recognises that the first priority must be to invest in a healthy cultural ecosystem."

The aims of the investment model are set down in the draft strategy:

- Support the cultural life of the city by enabling our citizens to be active, dynamic and creative agents of change.
- Invest in our cultural and creative sectors to develop the skills and capacity for production and innovation.
- Position Belfast as an international testing ground for new approaches to cultural engagement, development and place-making.
- Establish Belfast as a cultural destination.

There are also four published investment priorities:

- **Anchor:** support the cultural infrastructure for a thriving cultural ecosystem.
- **Activate:** empower civic and sectoral engagement, skills and capacity building in order to support inclusive growth.
- **Experiment:** facilitate innovation, catalyst projects and new ideas.
- **Open:** support outward-facing opportunities, including marketing and international cooperation.

The Belfast Agenda

The Belfast agenda's vision for 2035 is:

A city re-imagined and resurgent. A great place to live and work for everyone. Beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant [...] offering opportunities for everyone. A confident and successful city energising a dynamic and prosperous city region. A magnet for talent and business and admired around the world. A city people dream to visit.

Participation in sports activities, participation in arts and engagement in cultural activities are direct indicators of Belfast Agenda outcomes 3 and 5:

- Everyone in Belfast fulfils their potential.
- Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.

There are a number of other indicators and outcomes that cultural development and the implementation of *A City Imagining* in particular, can contribute to, including:

- City competitiveness
- Jobs and earnings
- Visitor numbers and spend
- Proportion of people who agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together and who believe their cultural identity is respected by society
- Educational attainment
- Volunteering
- Self-efficacy
- Satisfaction with Belfast as a place to live

An immediate priority for the city is inclusive growth. This is about cultural and social as well as economic conditions: *"It is also about making sure that people have the best life chances and the best living experience no matter where they are born or live in Belfast"*.

Like the Belfast Agenda, *A City Imagining* was built on the ethos of community planning: its rights-based approach to inclusive engagement places people at its heart; and the investment model will be achieved by better partnership working with the city's different agencies, organisations, groups and communities.

This report imaginatively re-interprets the strategic priorities of *A City Imagining* and proposes a new, four-year investment model (2020/21 to 2023/24) to deliver cultural transformation for the city.



Current investment model

In October 2012, Belfast City Council launched the Cultural framework for Belfast 2012-15. The strategy was subsequently reviewed and extended until 2020.

Core Multi-annual Funding

One of the key innovations under the Cultural Framework was the migration of all strategic grants to three- to four-year funding contracts. This created a portfolio of 56 core multi-annually funded (CMAF) arts and heritage organisations. Individual grants ranged from £10,000 to £150,000 per year. The total annual budget peaked at just under £1.5 million per year.

An internal review of CMAF from 2016 to 2018 found that:

- Funded organisations achieved 92 per cent of their audience targets; 90 per cent of their participation targets; and 90 per cent of their projected income.
- 552,738 people participated in workshops, classes and other activities put on by our funded organisations.
- 8,093,929 people came to shows, events and other activity put on by CMAF organisations.
- Investment helped to support, on average, 294 jobs per year, and create a total of 26,166 employment opportunities for artists.

However, it also found evidence that:

- There should be more segmentation of funding based on strategic priorities.
- Core multi-annual funding can restrict innovation, sectoral development and cultural practice.

Arts and Heritage Project Fund

The Arts and Heritage Project Fund (AHPF) opens biannually for projects that support the Cultural framework themes. The maximum grant available is £10,000, and the annual budget is £160,000.

An independent evaluation of Belfast City Council's small grants by Community Evaluation NI found that AHPF delivers effectively on attracting audiences, providing a range of arts and supporting artists. However, project efficacy could be improved by focusing on outcomes, not themes.

Community Festivals Fund

The Council also operates the community festivals fund (CFF) on behalf of the Department for Communities (DfC). DfC provides c.£75,000 per year to the Council on condition that the Council provides match funding. This means that £150,000 is invested in community festivals each year. However, the Council has limited control over the fund's purpose, impact and design, and in the context of a new cultural strategy, it may be an opportunity cost. A 2017 independent evaluation found that CFF provides benefit by enabling communities to celebrate their own culture, but:

- There is a tension between the criteria regarding innovation and quality art, and the desire to create sustainability and community engagement in festival design and delivery. This is reflected in the funding of two types of festivals, those driven by the community using a range of arts and those organised by festival arts organisations that seek to engage the community.
- There could be better demonstration of how funding is improving community ownership of larger festivals or how capacity building could support both innovation and community led design.

Creative and Cultural Belfast

Between 2012 and 2016, Belfast City Council in partnership with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) ran the Creative and Cultural Belfast programme, a large project fund which invested £900,000 in seven arts and heritage projects. As well as being the largest project grants awarded by Belfast City Council, this marked a change in the Council's fund management as officers had a more active role as project partners than the traditional hands-off funder-fundee relationship.

Resilience

Again in partnership with ACNI, in 2018 the council developed the £600,000 Resilience organisational development programme, which benefited 14 large organisations (that is, with turnover in excess of £400,000). This programme was innovative with cash funding as a secondary benefit (£25,000 per organisation). All participating organisations took part in a tailored package of support including organisational diagnostics, mentoring and training.

City Events Programme

The Council's City Events Unit (CEU) manages an annual programme of events. The events are delivered five ways:

1. Events programmed and produced by CEU, such as the Maritime Festival, Halloween Monster Mash and Christmas Lights Switch-on.
2. Supporting partners in bring events that are likely to generate significant economic impact. Historically, these have been sporting events, such as the 2017 Women's Rugby World Cup, UEFA Women's U19 Euros and IAAF World 24-hour race.
3. CEU also regularly bids to attract major events to the city, such as the 2015 Tall Ships Races and MTV Europe Music Awards in 2011, and then delivers this activity in partnership with key city partners.
4. Support for Sport (Sfs) project funding for sports events. The maximum grant available is £10,000 per event, and the annual budget is c.£60,000.
5. Currently CEU directly supports the Belfast City Marathon Limited, which was originally established by the Council. However, it has been agreed that this arrangement will cease by the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

Festivals and Events review

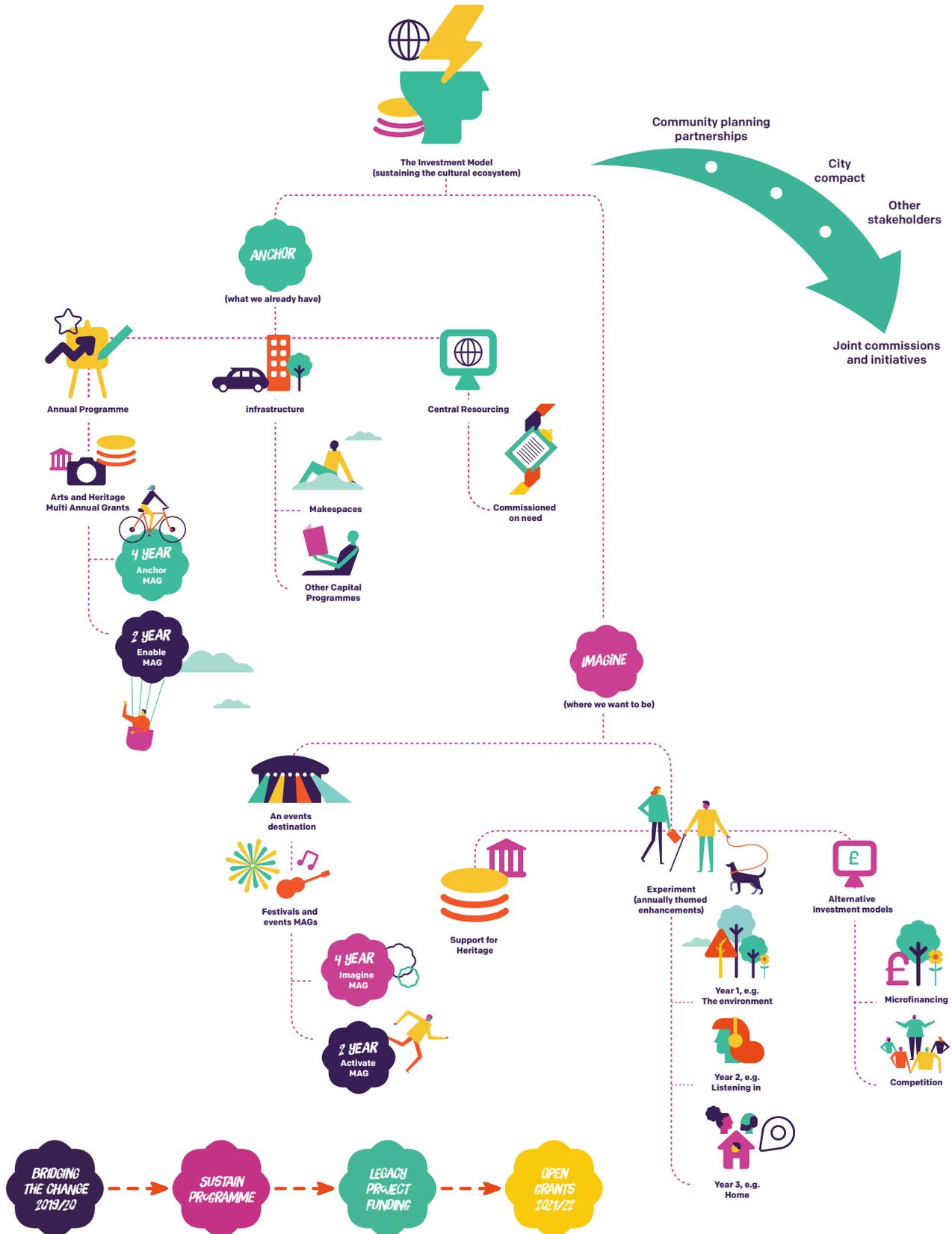
In 2017/18, Festivals and Events International (FEI) was commissioned to review Belfast's festivals and events product and make recommendations to help Belfast become an events destination - that is, a city with an international reputation for world-class events and festivals that attract visitors from around the world.

FEI identified nine council funding schemes that support festivals and events, generating 315 separate funding agreements in 2016/17.

Overall, FEI considered that while small "local" and "neighbourhood" festivals and events are valuable in terms of social capital, however investment is needed to increase the number of large "growth" and "signature" festivals and events that have the capacity to support inclusive economic growth.

The investment model

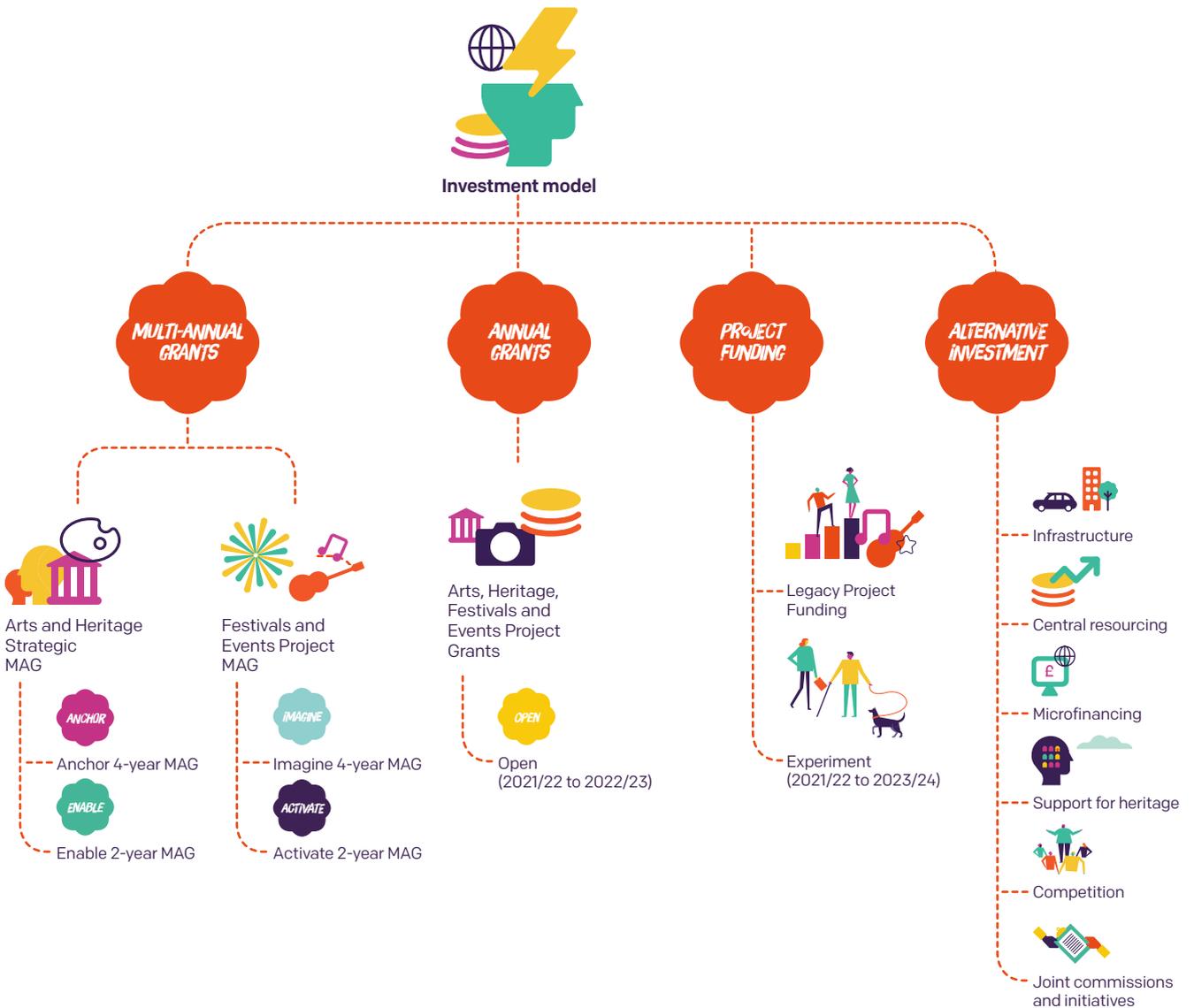
The following diagram summarises the different components of the investment model.



Please note - we are seeking approval to proceed with Multi-Annual Grants in October 2019. All other programmes are subject to further resource and/or feasibility

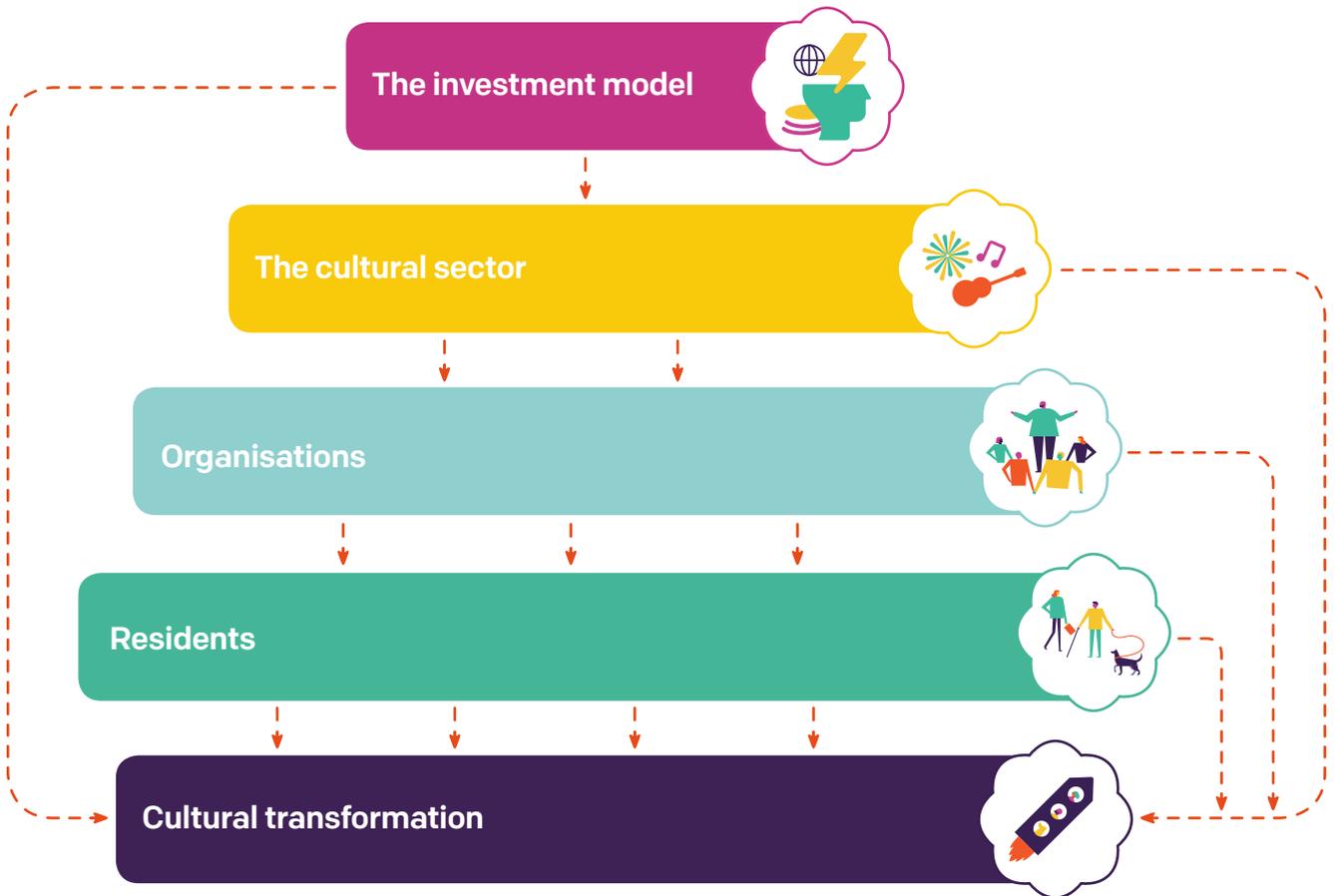
The process model

The following diagram shows how the grant-giving components will be administered.



What difference it will make?

Traditionally, funders and funding recipients have focused on inputs and outputs. In keeping with public policy in general and the Belfast Agenda in particular, the investment model is concerned with the delivery of outcomes - that is the difference it will make to cultural organisations and the cultural sector, the beneficiaries of their programmes (including volunteers, audiences and participants) and the cultural social and economic return for the city.



The council intends to develop an evaluation framework to evidence the outcomes of *A City Imagining* and its investment model.

Multi-annual Grants

There are two strands of multi-annual grants (MAGs) available, that is grants for:

1. Festivals and events with an audience of more than 10,000.
2. Arts and heritage organisations with a year-round programme of activity.

There are also two tiers of investment available: two- and four-year.



Grants available

The following table outlines the number and value of available grants.

Scheme	Total annual investment	Minimum organisation turnover	Minimum grant	Maximum grant	Estimated average grant	Estimated number of grants
Imagine	£600,000	£300,000	£50,001	£250,000 or 25% of turnover	£160,000	3-4
Activate	£360,000	£50,000	£10,000	£50,000 or 25% of turnover	£46,000	12
Anchor	£850,000	£300,000	£30,001	£150,000 or 10% turnover	£124,000	7
Enable	£500,000	£100,000	£10,000	£30,000 or 10% of turnover	£29,500	17

Who can apply?

Cultural activity is defined widely in keeping with *A City Imagining*. It can include arts, heritage, architecture, sport, food, language, customs, traditions and ideas.

Arts and Heritage MAGs

Arts and heritage MAGs are designed to help sustain our existing cultural offer. They are open to organisations that have a recurrent, year-round programme of work and ongoing costs. This is not intended for short- or fixed-term projects or single or one-off events.

Festivals and Events MAGs

A festival or event is an activity or a series of activities with a common theme that occurs on one day or over a period of several successive days.

Festivals and events MAGs are designed to develop large events and festivals that will help Belfast become an events destination. Applicants will have to demonstrate how they will grow their audience *by the end of the contract period*. This means that new festivals and events, and festivals with audiences less than 10,000 people, can still apply.

Funding thresholds for festivals and events are more generous to encourage organisations to avail of the opportunity. They are also in keeping with FEI's recommendations.

This also means that the grants are higher risk. To mitigate this, spend will be restricted to budget lines agreed between the Council and the grant recipient; grant recipients will be appointed a relationship manager; performance will be carefully monitored; funding may be withheld, reduced or withdrawn if performance is unsatisfactory; and other conditions may be applied to funding agreements.

Interdependencies

Organisations must only complete one application. This means that they cannot apply for both a Festivals and Events and Arts and Heritage Grant.

Arts and heritage organisations that run or are planning a festival or event with an audience of 10,000 people or more must apply for a Festivals and Events Grant regardless of size of their programme of activity.

Organisations with two or more festivals or events of the eligible size (that is, an audience of 10,000 or more) may apply for more than one grant within the same application form.

Applicants for four-year grants can choose to be automatically considered for a two-year grant if their four-year application is unsuccessful. They must complete additional questions to explain the changes they will have to make to their programme. They will then be considered for the maximum two-year grant (that is, £30,000 a year for arts and heritage; £50,000 a year for festivals and events, though may still be awarded less). Revised targets then will be mutually agreed between the Council and the applicant before the funding contract is issued.

Applicants that are eligible to apply for four-year funding may choose to apply for two year funding instead (for example, not all current festivals may have the capacity to become an *Imagine* festival).

Organisations that run a single festival; a single festival with a year-round festival development/outreach programme; or a series of festivals without a substantial standalone arts or heritage programme; regardless of the size of those festivals, are not eligible for an Arts and Heritage MAG.

An online eligibility quiz is being developed to help applicants navigate the different options available. An applicant will only be able to access the application form if the eligibility quiz deems them eligible for a particular strand or tier.



Grant-specific eligibility criteria

The table below provides a detailed breakdown of the grant-specific eligibility criteria by strand and tier.

Criteria	Imagine	Activate	Anchor	Enable
Primary purpose of organisation (from your constitution)	Culture	Culture	Arts or heritage	Arts or heritage
Type of activity	Festival or event	Festival or event	Year-round programme	Year-round programme
Minimum annual turnover	£300,000 average over the contract period (from 2020/21 to 2023/24)	£50,000 average over the contract period (from 2020/21 to 2021/22)	£300,000 average over the previous two financial years (based on annual accounts)	£100,000 average over the previous two financial years (based on annual accounts)
Staff	Has or will employ in the first year of the grant (that is, 2020/21) at least 3 full time equivalent staff	Has or will employ in the first year of the grant (that is, 2020/21) at least 1 full time equivalent staff	Has 3 full time equivalent staff	Has 1 full time equivalent staff
Planning	Event business plan covering for the first year of the grant (that is, 2020) Strategic plan up to at least 2023	Event business plan for the first year of the grant (2020)	Organisational business plan for the first year of the grant (2020) Longer-term strategic plan	Organisational business plan for the first year of the grant (2020)
Marketing	Marketing plan up to at least 2023	Marketing plan for at least the first year of the grant (2020)	Marketing plan for at least the first year of the grant (2020)	Marketing plan for at least the first year of the grant (2020)
Partners	Local, regional, international, media and cross-sectoral (that is, from outside the cultural sector) partners	Local and regional partners	Local, regional, international, media and cross-sectoral (that is, from outside the cultural sector) partners	Local and regional partners
Volunteers	Minimum 40 per year	Minimum 20 per year	Minimum 20 per year	Minimum 10 per year
Audience	65,000 by 2023 or a 10 per cent increase each year, whichever is greater	10,000 by 2022 or a 5 per cent increase each year, whichever is greater	Minimum 50,000 per year from 2018/19 to 2021/22	No minimum requirement
Visitors	25 per cent of audience from outside Belfast including a target for visitors from outside NI	20 per cent of audience from outside Belfast including a target for visitors from outside NI	No minimum requirement	No minimum requirement

This is in addition to the Council's standard eligibility criteria, such as the organisation has an office in and operational focus in Belfast City Council local government district; is legally constituted and not-for-profit; is in good financial health.

Quality criteria

If an application is deemed eligible, it will be scored against the following criteria.

Criteria	Weighting %
Quality of programme	30
Vision	
Quality of content	
Quality of audience experience	
Marketing	
Impact of activity	40
Targets	
Contribution to: A City Belonging (impact on people) A City Challenging (impact on place) A City Creating (impact on sector) A City Exploring (impact on worldview/our place in the world)	
Monitoring and evaluating impact	
Note: applicants must score 75 per cent or over (that is, 30 marks or more) in this section to be eligible for a MAG	
Readiness for investment	30
Planning	
Financial management	
Governance	
Skills	
Environmental impact	

Applications must score at least 65 per cent overall to be considered for investment.

Even if an application scores 65 or over, this is not a guarantee of funding as this scheme is expected to be very competitive, and the funding threshold will depend on demand, quality of applications and resources available.

Additionality

In keeping with FEI recommendations, Imagine MAG investment should be a single settlement figure. This means that Imagine investees should not be eligible to apply for other Council funding for the same festival or event, including ancillary activity such as outreach or audience development. (*Imagine* organisations may not apply for funding for additional festivals and events or their annual programme.)

Activate festivals and events should not be eligible to apply for Community Festivals Fund for the same festival or event, including ancillary activity. This is because *Activate* investees will have successfully secured 'growth' funding allowing the Community Festivals Fund to focus on supporting and enabling local neighbourhood festivals.

All other funding applied for should be for activity that is clearly additional to that supported through CMAGs. Depending on the outcome of the ongoing Review of Grants and any other changes in policy, the Council should reserve the right to exclude CMAG recipients from applying for other Council grants or to prioritise applications from applicants not in receipt of a cultural multi-annual grant.

The Place and Economy Department will continue to work with colleagues across the Council to consider interdependencies, reduce duplication and streamline funding.

Engagement

Following on from the substantial engagement with the sector to develop *A City Imagining*, there will be information and engagement sessions both before applications open in August-September and post-opening in October 2019.

Engagement will focus on guiding applicants towards the most appropriate strand and tier and supporting festivals and events to avail of the opportunity. Particular consideration will be given to engaging with those groups of organisations least likely to benefit from MAGs by providing assurance of their value within the ecosystem, as well as informing them of other opportunities being developed as part of the new investment model.

Programme delivery

It is recommended that:

1. All CMAG investees are appointed a dedicated relationship manager. The relationship manager will act as a single point of contact between the organisation and the Council.
2. Relationship managers for *Imagine* and *Activate* investees should support the delivery of the festival or event (while ensuring that all liabilities remain with the organisation). Support required will vary depending on the event and organisation: this should be agreed between the organisation and the relationship manager as soon as possible after project initiation. It is likely that this will include regular project meetings.
3. *Anchor* and *Enable* relationship managers must have at least one formal meeting with their clients per year.
4. CMAG relationship managers should meet regularly to share knowledge and learning and explore opportunities to collaborate.
5. The Council should map and streamline communications with relevant external interfaces, such as the City Compact, Events Advisory Panel, Visit Belfast and so on.
6. The Council should provide centralised support where there is a strategic risk (for example, limited evidence of impact or poor cash flow management) or opportunity (for example, experiential cluster marketing) based on intelligence from the relationship managers and other sources, such as the Resilience Programme and SWOT analysis of CMAG applications.

7. Before the grant contract is released, *Imagine* and *Enable* investees must confirm which budget lines they will spend the Council's investment against. This is in keeping with project funding practice, manages risk and minimises the issue of Council subvention being spent on commercially viable performers or other activity. (Arts and heritage investment will remain unrestricted as per CMAF previously.)
8. Performance of *Imagine* and *Activate* festivals should be independently verifiable. The Council should work with other agencies, in particular Tourism NI, to agree a common monitoring framework and tools to measure economic impact.
9. *Imagine* and *Activate* festivals that consistently underperform (force majeure allowing) should be penalised. While the Council should develop a framework within which penalties can be applied (for example, by minimum and maximum penalties, extenuating circumstances), this should also be agreed in discussion with the investee.
10. The Council should develop a reserves policy in anticipation that some festivals and events may generate surplus income.

Project funding



Legacy Project Funding

It is proposed that in order to minimise other change alongside the implementation of CMAG and to maintain familiar opportunities for those organisations exiting the CMAF portfolio, project funding (that is CFF, AHPF and Sfs) remains substantially unchanged in 2020/21.

There will be two amendments:

1. In AHPF, the four themes from the Cultural framework (*Distinctly Belfast*, *Inspiring Communities*, *Attracting Audiences* and *Strengthening the Sector*) will be replaced with the four themes from *A City Imagining* (*A City Belonging*, *A City Challenging*, *A City Creating* and *A City Exploring*).
2. *Imagine* and *Activate* festivals should be ineligible from applying to CFF.

It is then recommended that in 2021/22:

- CFF transfers to City and Neighbourhoods. This is in keeping with the FEI recommendation and outcomes-focused funding best practice, providing separation between festivals with a primarily social purpose and festivals with a significant economic return, while levelling the playing field for applicants from the community sector.
- AHPF and Sfs are amalgamated as Open grants (see Open grants section below).
- Experiment grants - themed funding for bespoke projects or programme enhancements - are introduced.

Experiment Grants

The purpose of *Experiment* grants is to support work that contributes to *A City Imagining*, but does not commonly occur in Belfast. As it is therefore essential that this investment is both focused and reflexive, *Experiment* projects should be commissioned biannually around a theme or provocation.

A number of potential themes can already be identified in *A City Imagining* and by gap analysis of the anticipated impact of CMAG. These include the environment, technology, heritage, meanwhile use and creation of “extraordinary ordinary space”. Gaps may change or further emerge after CMAG is awarded.

Experiment grants may also support new work or enhancements to existing work themed around *A City Imagining*'s strategic projects, such as *Listening in*, *At home*, *Looking out* or *Obviously Belfast*.

So that fundraising is not detrimental to experimentation, it is recommended that any requirement to lever funding from other sources in minimal. However, to allow *Enable*, *Activate* and *Anchor* investees to experiment while ensuring maximum additionality, no public sector core funding (including CMAG and ACNI annual funding) can be used as match.

It is recommended that the *Experiment* themes are mapped and prioritised in consultation with the City Compact.

Implementation of *Experiment* grants should be incremental with the view that, if successful, *Experiment* grants will have phased out open grants by the end of 2023/24. Consideration should then be given under the next investment model to larger, longer-term project investment that would allow successful *Experiment* projects to be repeated, developed or main streamed.

This investment model strand may also be a vehicle for to deliver shared outcomes in partnership with other public sector agencies, for example, arts and health, sport and criminal justice or food and good relations.

To this end, *Experiment* grants should have an annual theme or priorities overlying the basic OPG criteria. This might be thematic, such as “Listening in” or “At home”; it could be activity-based, such as digital arts, animation of “extraordinary ordinary spaces” or international work; it could be outcomes-focused, such as art with an environmental impact; or some combination of the three.

Annual grants



Open Grants

Open grants are an interim measure intended to support organisations exiting out of CMAF and the transition from *Legacy to Experiment* project funding.

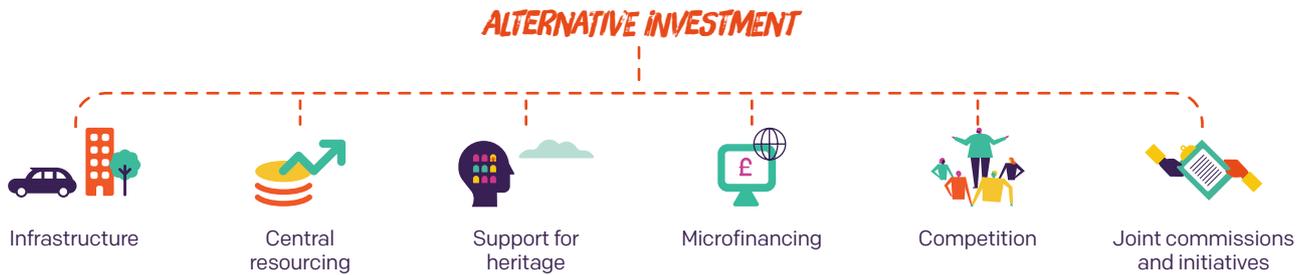
From 2021/22 to 2022/23, *Open* will replace the biannual SFS and AHPF with an annual call for funding for one-off projects and annual programmes in any cultural discipline (however, the interface with sports development, which is funded through City and Neighbourhoods, requires further consideration) are based on the current AHPF.

Applicants will be required to demonstrate their impact against one *A City Imagining* theme (compared to CMAG, where organisations must demonstrate impact against all four themes).

As detailed above (see Experiment grants), it is intended that Open grants are phased out in their entirety by 2023/24.



Alternative investment



Infrastructure

As the city rapidly develops, creating more infrastructure for people to work in and live in the city, land is an increasingly valuable commodity. This means that some cultural organisations have had to move out of their existing premises. Other organisations are in premises that are not fit for purpose, whether due to organisational growth or building maintenance, but have limited opportunity to move.

Makespaces

Visual artists are essential to the city's cultural ecosystem. However, artist studios have historically struggled to access funding. This is because studios generally support individual artists in their own practice, which cannot be described as a programme or project, the usual premise of funding.

It is recommended that the Council develops a scheme to support visual artist workspaces. Other schemes globally have adopted different approaches to supporting artist workspaces, including harnessing bulk-buying power in relation to utilities; technical support to secure long-term or below-market leases; technical or financial support for capital purchases; meanwhile use; residencies or shared space in public (central and local government-owned, libraries, schools, colleges and so on) or private facilities (such as offices, shopping centres, vacant buildings and new developments); subsidised rents; and alternative operating models.

While the need to support workspace for visual artists has been evidenced, the Council should also consider the need to support other cultural makers. The council should also seek opportunities to learn from and work with other sectors and subsectors that have successfully developed shared workspaces, such as the creative industries, hackerspaces and fab labs. This would have the additional benefit of cross-sectoral knowledge sharing and collaboration.

In scoping its options, the Council should carefully consider applicability to the city's particular ecosystem and any potential disbenefits of intervention (see Other capitalisation section below).

Any scheme should be developed in consultation with the sector and in partnership with ACNI, which has a remit to directly support individual artists, and relevant resource organisations, such as Craft NI.

The partnership should also consider how best to support the capacity of makers and the market to increase opportunities for earned income.

Other capitalisation

Under the current Cultural Framework's *Strengthening the Sector*, the Council supported a number of requests for funding to develop business cases, economic appraisals and feasibility studies to help arts organisations purchase their own premises. Few of these organisations have now purchased a premise, although some have been able to secure longer-term or more fit-for-purpose tenure. (Prior to 2012, of course, a sizeable number of arts organisations, such as the MAC, Lyric and Youth Action, did open new, purpose-built premises.)

Capitalisation projects are usually undertaken with the aim that the organisation becomes more sustainable. However, it should be noted that there is little evidence that capitalisation achieves this, and some evidence that capitalisation makes organisations more reliant on public subsidy.

While it is likely that the Council will continue to be asked to invest in capitalisation, it is recommended that a framework is put in place to assure the quality of the output. It should also consider alternatives to cash finance, such as technical support. If capitalisation is supported or funded, consideration should be given to the evaluation of non-economic indicators of sustainability balanced against the risk of disbenefits such as increased reliance on public sector funding.

Central resourcing

Resource organisations provide advice and guidance to other organisations, either clustered around cultural practice (such as dance, theatre or minority language) or business function (such as marketing, volunteering or fundraising). Because these organisations do not work directly with the public, it can be difficult to demonstrate impact on par with more frontline organisations when applying for funding: no resource organisations were funded through CMAF. However, they can in themselves be a form of subvention by providing valuable and cost-effective support services to the cultural sector.

Arts and heritage resource organisations can apply for legacy project funding, and Open funding may extend this option to other cultural sectors. Resource organisations are more likely to be successful under these schemes as they require a concentrated, rather than broad impact (for example, *Strengthening the Sector* or *A City Creating*).

ACNI's draft five-year strategy, *Inspire, Connect, Lead*, also includes an objective to "invest in resource organisations to support practitioners through the creation of networks and the provision of training and professional development".

Rather than directly investing in these organisations, it is recommended that the Council tenders for specialist support services based on the needs of the cultural sector. This should include the tendering for the provision of centralised support to the CMAG portfolio (see Programme delivery section above).

Support for heritage

Organisations that have the primary purpose of promoting or conserving heritage have historically been underrepresented both in terms of applications made to and money invested through strategic grants. By comparison, heritage activity has been relatively well serviced through project funding, which will continue under this investment model, including with an option to prioritise heritage under Experiment grants.

However, supporting discrete heritage projects is not a substitute for supporting the sector. It is recommended that the Council develops a programme of support for the heritage sector to help ready key organisations for strategic investment.

Microfinancing

The NI code of practice for reducing bureaucracy in grant funding to the voluntary and community sector sets down a number of light-touch principles to allow for microfinancing, that is grants under £1,500. This may be a useful mechanism to support study visits, forums, networking, partnerships and such ad hoc opportunities that build international cultural relations and contribute to *A City Exploring*.

Micro-financed Participatory Budgeting - that is where residents decide on which projects to invest in - could also be piloted as an alternative mechanism to develop active citizenship under *A City Belonging*.

Competition

Competition as a form of investment is often overlooked. It is particularly applicable to supporting individual cultural practitioners. It can be practical, such as a city historian or civic artist-in-residence; it can be honorific, akin to freedom of the city; or it can be cash, such as the Dublin Literary Award. Such competitions can also generate substantial publicity for the sponsoring city.

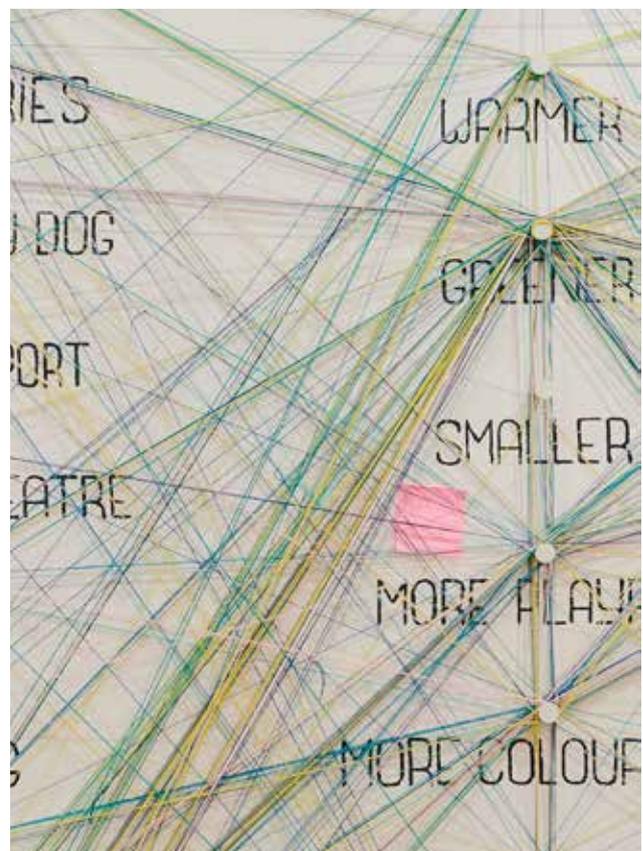
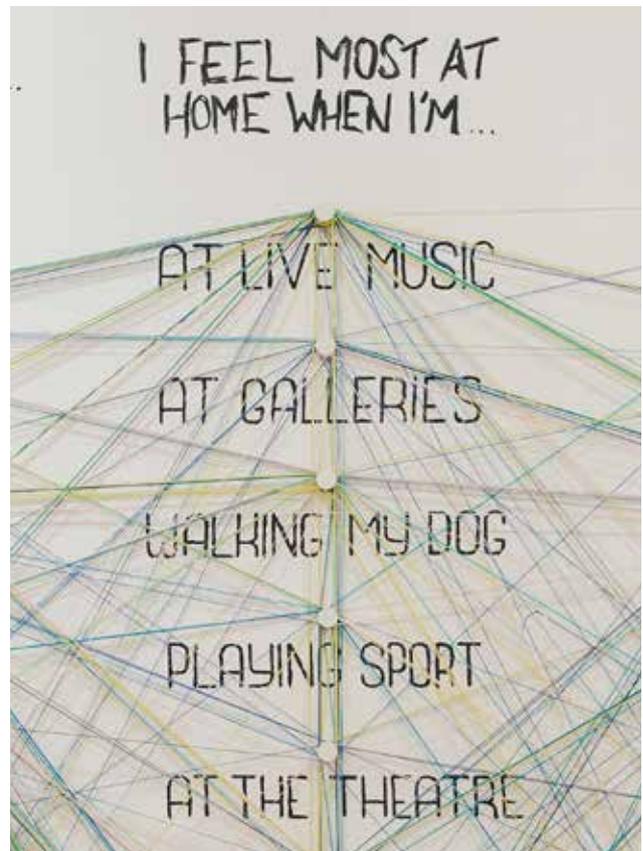
Joint commissions and collaborative initiatives

The Council has already adopted the Cultural Cities Enquiry's City Compact recommendation. The City Compact will bring together like minded people and institutions to support the implementation of the strategy and lever additional investment, including for joint commissions and other collaborative initiatives.

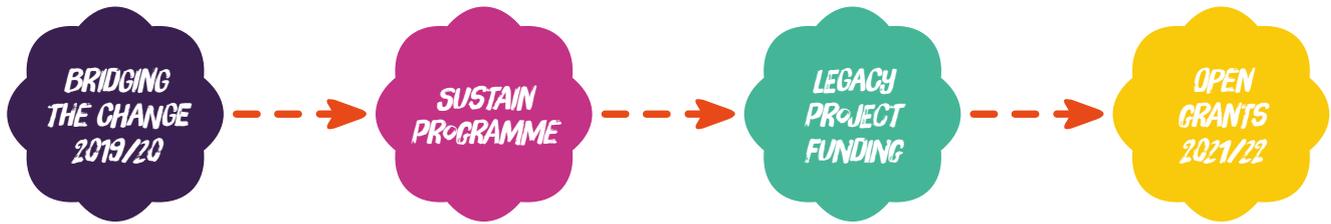
It is recommended that the City Compact considers its relationship to the community planning partnerships to ensure that culture is integral in to all community planning outcomes and create additional investment opportunities.

The City Compact should also consider the recommendations made in the Cultural Cities Enquiry to increase spending on culture, namely:

1. Enterprise development partnerships
2. Contactless donations
3. Corporate social venture funds
4. Tax reliefs
5. BIDs+ model and tourist levy



Bridging the change



While the sector was substantively supportive of proposals for changes in investment during the consultation process for *A City Imagining*, it is inevitable that some organisations will be negatively affected by the move from CMAF to CMAG. Notably, where the CMAF portfolio comprised 56 organisations, CMAG will likely comprise of a lower number. The CMAF portfolio also includes a small number of organisations with a turnover less than £100,000 that will not be eligible to apply for CMAG.

While CMAF made a relatively small contribution to organisations’ income at an average of 4 per cent between 2012 and 2016, the average grant over the same period was

£26,400, which could equate to an annual salary. For some organisations, such as small organisations or artforms with less opportunity to earn income, such as community or disability arts, the proportion of income made up by CMAF is likely to be higher. However, new CMAF applicants in 2016 were advised to use 8 per cent of income as a benchmark of the amount of funding they should apply for.

To mitigate any negative impact of the proposed changes, it is recommended that the full investment model is introduced in phases as outlined below.

Year	CMAG	Sustain	Annual and project funding	Alternative investment
2020/21	CMAG investment allocated	Programme to support organisations exiting the CMAF portfolio	<i>Imagine</i> investees ineligible to apply; <i>Activate</i> investees ineligible to apply to CFF; no other changes to legacy project funding	
2021/22	Applications for two-year CMAG re-open		CFF transferred to City and Neighbourhoods; AHPF and SfS amalgamate as Open Grants to support projects and annual programmes; pilot Experiment grants.	New investment rolled out subject to need, feasibility and resource
2022/23	CMAG two-year investment allocated		Open and Experiment with Experiment budget increased (subject to pilot)	New investment rolled out subject need, feasibility and resource
2023/24	CMAG contracts end; review and revise scheme		Last year of Open funding; Experiment budget maximised	New investment rolled out subject need, feasibility and resource

Sustain

The purpose of the Sustain programme is to assist organisations exiting out of the current CMAF portfolio, which will affect an estimated 20 organisations. It is recommended that Sustain comprises two strands.

1. Technical assistance which can be procured on behalf of an organisation to assist with an immediate issue, such as financial planning or options appraisal in response to the absence of core funding.

2. Funding to support organisational development and innovation. Based on Arts Council England’s OD Thrive programme, this could include support for:

- a. Networks: groups trying to form deeper relationships and collaborations and develop their co-design and co-production ethos
- b. Aggregations: projects seeking to aggregate two or more organisations
- c. Individual organisations: undertaking organisational development on themselves

Funding thresholds should be set based on the funding deficit capped at Council procurement and grant ceilings.



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