



Clár Éire Ildánach  
Creative Ireland  
Programme



Rialtas Áitiúil Éireann  
Local Government Ireland



# Culture & Creativity Strategy

2023–2027



**Galway City**

---

## Contents

	<b>Foreword(s) from Mayor and/or Chief Executive</b>	02
01	<b>Creative Ireland 2023–2027</b>	04
02	<b>Culture and Creativity in Galway City Council</b>	06
03	<b>The Creative Ireland Vision for Galway City Council</b>	10
04	<b>How The Creative Ireland Programme Works</b>	
	Principles and Values of Creative Communities	12
05	<b>The Strategic Priorities for Galway City Council</b>	14
06	<b>Implementation by the Galway City Council Culture and Creativity Team</b>	16
	<b>Map of Galway City Council (Electoral Areas)</b>	18

Cover Image Credits (L to R): Boyd Challenger,  
Anita Murphy, Tamara Eckhardt.



## Forewords

Galway is at the cultural heart of the region, of the West and of Ireland as a whole. We look to Europe and beyond for inspiration and to inspire. We see culture as pivotal to our future and to our development as a city and a region. Culture is also an intrinsic element of our economic, environmental and social sustainability and these elements in the city and in the region will connect to enhance our lives and the lives of children and young people who wish to live and work in this region throughout their lives. It has been a tumultuous period over the last number of years for Galway not least in contemplation of the cultural and creative ambitions, hopes, aspirations and occasional disappointments and setbacks which the city and region have lived through.

Galway City Council's Culture and Creativity Team, which is drawn from a wide range of units and directorates within Galway City Council including some of its key cultural institutions and the Galway Culture Company, has reviewed how well they felt the Creative Ireland Strategy 2018–2022 had worked. Reflecting on the strengths of the programme, members of the team felt that the strategy had managed to deliver on its priorities, despite the setbacks and refocusing that had been required to address delivery in a time of a national crisis, particularly through 2020 and 2021 and the COVID-19 pandemic and of course the effect that had on the delivery of the Foreword

European Capital of Culture designation. A particular strength of the programme was its adaptability and flexibility in approach. Having the interdisciplinary team in place overseeing the strategy, ensured that the collective inputs of the members — each of whom also linked in to external networks in communities, arts, culture, heritage and language, as well as specific target groups, made it easier to adapt programme delivery and added to its success.

Galway is a vibrant, diverse city, cultural, creative, dynamic, friendly, focussed city. It is a city of learning, a city of youth, a city of rich cultural heritage and of stunning natural environment. Galway is a creative city where everybody matters.

We wish to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of “Creative Galway 2023–2027” from the cultural, social, business, community and statutory sectors. “Everybody Matters” is our still relevant and overarching cultural strategic framework and to look forward to enhancing and expanding our engagement and the engagement of our communities and city in new creative and cultural partnerships and adventures. We look forward to continuing to work closely with colleagues nationally in Creative Ireland.

**Cllr. Clodagh Higgins**  
Mayor of the City of Galway

**Brendan McGrath**  
Chief Executive, Galway City Council

*Cruinniú na nÓg Galway*  
Community Circus, Galway City.  
**Photograph:** Boyd Challenger.



# 1 Creative Ireland 2023–2027

The Creative Ireland Programme is an all-of-government initiative committed to enhancing access to, engagement with, and enjoyment of Ireland’s culture and creativity. Within the broad range of available definitions, creativity is considered as *a set of innate abilities and learned skills; the capacity of individuals and organisations to transcend accepted ideas and norms and by drawing on imagination to create new ideas that bring additional value to human activity.*

The vision of the Creative Ireland Programme 2023–2027 is to mainstream creativity in the life of the nation so that individually and collectively, in our personal lives and in our institutions, we can realise our full creative potential thereby promoting individual, community and national wellbeing.

The Creative Ireland Programme will deliver through collaboration and partnership promoting understanding and appreciation of the value of creativity in all its forms — whether through the arts, culture, heritage, or technology.

The Creative Ireland Programme will prioritise its work around five aspects for the period 2023–2027:

1. Creative Youth
2. Creative Communities
3. Creative Industries
4. Creative Health and Wellbeing
5. Creative Climate Action and Sustainability

Through the Creative Ireland Programme, *Creative Communities* supports the partnership between the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and Ireland’s local authorities. This partnership enables citizens and communities to explore their culture and creativity at local level and, where appropriate, leverage that creativity to strengthen wellbeing, advance social cohesion and support economic development.

*Creative Communities* is also innovative in deploying creativity to achieve greater integration across targeted policy priorities. This has delivered new creative engagement initiatives in relation to for example children and young people, older persons, climate action, and local economies. Individuals and communities perception about the role and value of culture and creativity as central to our wellbeing in its broadest sense is being enhanced.

The opportunity embraced within the Galway Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023 - 2027 is to support people’s participation, inclusion and expression within communities, and further strengthen local creative economies.



Design Lab, Architecture at the Edge, Galway City. **Photograph:** Anita Murphy.

That’s Life, James O’Connell, Bounce, Galway City

## 2

### Culture and Creativity in Galway City

Galway City has a proud tradition of combining grass roots creativity with delivery of sophisticated arts and creative spectacles. Located on Ireland's Atlantic Coast, it is the heart of a Western Region with a combined population which has now reached almost half a million people, at 483,677, according to the 2021 preliminary census data.

In Galway itself, the city experienced a population growth of 6% with its population growing from 78,668 in 2016 to 83,456 in 2021 while Galway County had even greater population growth of 8% with its population increasing from 179,390 to 192,995 over the same period. This gives Galway City overall a population of 276,451. The 2021 Census, will likely show an increase in the youth profile, which already had one of the highest proportions of young people in the Country, of which there has always been a bulge in the number of people in the 18-24 age bracket, due to the specific impact of the large third level student population in Galway.

Galway has two established higher education institutions, University of Galway (formerly National University of Ireland, Galway) and the Atlantic Technological University (ATU). Galway Technical Institute also provides further and higher education courses including foundation courses in art and film which feed into courses in the other institutions at Level 7 and above. In Galway alone, there are approximately 6,000 students in the ATU campuses, while the University of Galway has an even larger student population of more than 21,000. This contributes to the vibrant and youthful profile of the City and County, and many of these students come in from the region, and later stay on to work in the area.

While Galway is known as a regional centre for employment in pharmaceutical, healthcare and medical devices sectors, it also has a thriving creative and cultural economy.

#### Creative Industries

The Creative Industries are a powerful economic sector being strengthened by a surge in digitalisation and services. A total of 3,132 enterprises make up the creative economy of the Galway, Mayo and Roscommon region with Galway (City and County) accounting for two thirds of these companies. It is estimated that these sectors account for the employment of 3,878 people which is approximately 3.4% of total employment across the County.

The value of the creative sector to the west of Ireland is estimated as €478.8 million with exports of €57.3 million.

Despite the impact of COVID-19, creative services can be more resilient to economic pressures, with the growth of digital and sharing economies and emerging e-commerce activity internationally. Advances in augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), blockchain, digital marketing and online advertising enable industry players to seamlessly cross international boundaries to converge, connect, and collaborate once the required infrastructure and resources are in place.

#### Cultural Infrastructure

Galway has a rich cultural capital in terms of both physical and human resources which have been built up and developed over decades. Well established cultural organisations such as the Galway International Arts Festival, Druid Theatre, Baboró and many others owe much of the energy that led to their foundation to the creativity and imagination of individuals. The success of these initial creative ventures in turn spawned many other now established groups, events and institutions ranging from the annual Cúirt Literature Festival, Music for Galway, Galway Early Music Festival, the Town Hall Theatre, Galway Arts Centre, The O' Donohue Theatre in the University of Galway, Galway City Museum, Galway Film Fleadh, Ardán

(formerly Galway Film Centre), Palás Cinema and many more. Galway is the location for a number of independent film and television production companies, as well as TG4, the National Irish Language media and television broadcaster. There are also a significant number of smaller scale community festivals, amateur drama groups, community-based orchestras, choirs, youth arts groups and many more.

Galway also now has Music Generation projects for both the City and County, with staff employed to promote participation in music for under 18-year-olds.

The place of Galway on the Atlantic Seaboard has also been crucial to these developments, it remains home to the largest Gaeltacht in the country, and the city itself has long been committed to being a bilingual city. Galway the home to the National Irish Language Theatre "An Taibhdhearc" which has a long history and pedigree but is also now reinventing itself to take on a more contemporary role in relation to the Irish language in a partnership with Fíabín.

#### Making Waves

Cultural imprints of course are broader indeed than the Arts and even the Creative Industries sector, and also embrace the wider physical environment, the heritage and folklore of an area and its communities. Galway's cultural strategies, its Arts Plan and other relevant plans share a common goal of putting culture at the centre of local development.

Galway's uniqueness, as a vibrant creative city located on the edge of Europe, its bilingual status and its strong heritage and its people's links with its landscape were some of the many attributes combined with the established track record of the Artistic and Creative community in Galway which contributed to its success in its bid for European Capital of Culture (ECOC) for 2020.

"Making Waves" was the ambitious and innovative plan for Galway2020. Creative concepts such as "Small Towns, Big Ideas" have provided a model for initiating smaller scale partnerships between creatives and communities such as those developed under the first strategy for Creative Ireland in Galway 2018-2022. The influence of one strategy on another, and the learning experienced by the team members in the internal Culture and Creativity team within the Local Authority, will be a key element in ensuring that this process is organic, responsive to community needs and views, and adaptable to future circumstances.

#### Galway 2020 Legacy and Creative Ireland

The legacy of Galway 2020, will be pursued specifically through an interagency company, the Galway Culture Company, which shares some membership with the Culture and Creativity Team within the Local Authority. Discussion is already taking place as to how the activity of the Culture Company can complement and provide synergy with the programme being devised under the auspices of Creative Ireland in each of the Galway local authorities. Areas of likely collaboration will include providing support for capacity building in communities, a deficit which was identified during the rollout of Small Towns, Big Ideas. Dovetailing activities offers exciting possibilities to fill gaps in capacity and potentially offer mentoring, animation or training supports to significantly improve equality of access to the Creative Ireland programme, as well as other arts or creative funds.

A number of initiatives undertaken by the Culture and Creativity Team during the 2020 period, complemented larger scale projects being rolled out by Galway2020 and brought additional dimensions to the larger projects in line with the access objectives of Creative Ireland.

## Learning from the Past

*“I am tomorrow, or some future day, what I establish today. I am today what I established yesterday, or some previous day.”*

In reviewing the implementation of the Creative Ireland Culture and Creativity Strategy, the members of the Culture and Creativity Team, which is drawn from a wide range of units and directorates within the Galway City Local Authority and some of its key cultural institutions, reviewed how well they felt the Strategy had worked.

Reflecting on the strengths of the programme, members of the team felt that the strategy had managed to deliver on its priorities, despite the setbacks and refocusing that had been required to address delivery in a time of a national crisis, such as COVID-19. Moreover, it was suggested that a particular strength of the programme was its adaptability and flexibility in approach. Having the interdisciplinary team in place overseeing the strategy, ensured that the collective inputs of the members – each of whom also linked in to external networks in communities, arts, culture, heritage and language, as well as specific target groups, made it easier to adapt programme delivery.

*For example, the Town Hall Theatre delivered a very well received project remotely while the venue was closed in collaboration with nursing home residents. They paired up various artists with residents to tell their stories, share specific artforms and these were filmed and recorded for wider distribution by RTÉ giving a permanent record of the artistic collaboration. This had many beneficial impacts. It provided much needed income and activity for creatives who would otherwise have had no performance outlet, it provided an aspect of social connectivity for the nursing home residents, and it created a unique artistic and cultural store, which has also been filmed and disseminated to a wider audience.*

Collaboration across departments and across disciplines was felt to be a huge strength of the approach. Organisations such as the Local Enterprise Office, which previously had dealings mostly with individuals who were developing artistic enterprises, were now involved in planning actions through the Culture and Creativity Team, and identified ways to bring collective benefit to artists and creatives.

An example of this was in the promotion of a joint marketing campaign to promote individual creative enterprises collectively in advance of a Christmas Market. In turn this generated additional turnover for the creative promoters when the market opened for business and also for online business. It also contributed to promoting Galway as a destination for creative entrepreneurs.

## Opportunities to build on the strengths of the Strategy

Reviewing the programme also highlighted areas where members acknowledged there was a need for improvement. The issue of providing capacity support for more marginal groups, individuals and communities has already been highlighted. Other difficulties lay with a lack of dedicated co-ordination staff and administrative support for the Culture and Creativity team, over the period of implementation. A lot has been learnt about how to adapt delivery in the face of an unanticipated crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular in relation to remote delivery of an artistic or creative product.

The rising costs of energy and the cost of living generally are already impacting on the ability of arts and culture organisations to maintain existing facilities and services, and offer a challenge to the future delivery of projects.

It was also felt that communicating the message about Creative Ireland could be improved, and that there is a need to look at how to get young people involved directly in promoting the programme to their peers. While *Cruinniú na nÓg* has stimulated much one-off youth creativity, there was a feeling that the emphasis on a single day of activities might be at the expense of longer term more sustained engagement of children and young people in creative activity.

More evaluation of activities, and impacts is also needed. While there is some useful information obtained at the national level there is a need for more specific information including age specific, and site-specific feedback. Evaluation of impact, and ‘evidence of effectiveness’ needs to be embedded in the strategy going forward, for all aspects of the programme.

Some great innovation was identified by members of the team. These varied in terms of focusing on new creative ideas to those involving exciting collaborations between new partners, which can be built on for the future. Two examples of these were led by Galway City Museum.

*The first, the creation of a Sensory Room within a space dedicated to a larger exhibition on Castles, for which the funding had come from Galway 2020. This idea was developed in response to the needs of an individual autistic child, and germinated into the idea of having a quiet space within the larger exhibition space. It has now become a specific design feature, as well as a safe space for those who many others. This can also be retained and used again as a feature of future exhibitions, which then can become more accessible to groups where members have similar needs.*

*The second involved a collaborative project with Travellers who were resident on the Carrabrowne Halting Site, and with some of the Traveller organisations to undertake a model of a Traveller encampment. Photographer Tamara Eckhardt visited Carrabrowne and took photographs which were then captioned and organised to illustrate the living conditions for children on the site, by members of Minceir Whidden, a Traveller student society in the University of. The photographic record of this element of the project, entitled “The Children of Carrabrowne” is now mounted on high quality steel panels in the open air around the Museum for easy public display. The display panels which were also supported by Creative Ireland, will also be available for future exhibitions of creative product.*

## The Way Forward

Membership of the Culture and Creativity Team for Creative Ireland has already been broadened by the addition of some new team members to draw in additional expertise and relevant staff. These include the Healthy Galway Co-ordinator, a new position within the Council, and the Head of Recreation and Amenity.

In order to plan the smooth implementation of the strategy, and the creation of the first of the annual implementation plans, it will be essential to ensure there is some dedicated co-ordination and administrative personnel available to support the work of the team.

In Everybody Matters — A Cultural Sustainability Strategy Framework for Galway 2016–2025, Galway City Council set out its vision for a sustainable approach to promoting culture and creativity in Galway. This vision, and the seven strategic objectives underpinning it, also provided the basis of Galway’s successful designation as a European Capital of Culture for 2020.

While there has been substantial learning from the major initiatives and cultural activities that have been supported variously through Creative Ireland, European Capital of Culture funding and many other related programmes during the period from 2018 to 2022, the broad vision for Galway remains the same. However, there has also been significant disruption to the implementation of activity to further that vision, due to the impact of Covid 19 and its aftermath. However, that too has provided opportunities for learning. In meeting the challenges to refocus activities, new mechanisms for delivery are emerging, with a particular focus on those individuals and groups who have missed out on access to culture from traditional venues.

### 3

## The Creative Ireland Vision for Galway City

Our vision for Galway in 2027 is of a city where creativity and cultural rights of everyone matters. Imagination and innovation are supported through creative and cultural expression fostered in a sustainable manner.

Following on from the first Culture and Creativity Strategy and in anticipation of an exciting legacy from Galway's period as European Capital of Culture in 2020, the Culture and Creativity team in Galway City Council will take the lead to build on the relationships they have already developed, and identify how best to ensure that the key aims within this vision embracing sustainability, imagination, inclusion, creativity and innovation continue to be reflected in actions on the ground, and in the processes which accompany those actions.

This vision reflects a continuity with both the previous Culture and Creativity Strategy and Everybody Matters: A Cultural Sustainability Strategy for Galway 2016–2025. This latter strategy, was key to the success of the European Capital of Culture bid, and was compiled in collaboration with Galway County Council reflecting the strong interdependence of the two authorities. People living in the County may work and socialise in the city. Many of the young people studying in schools and colleges in the city travel in from the County and further afield in the region.

In ensuring that this vision is realised it will be important to ensure that the cultural rights of all in the community — the very young and the very old, the marginalised and those with disabilities or special needs and those with niche cultural interests and ideas, or differing language needs can be addressed. This poses challenges to the Galway City Council, the Culture and Creativity Team who will lead the rollout of this strategy, and the partners with whom they will be working.

Finding solutions to address present inequalities and to bring about genuine access to the arts and culture for all, and deliver this despite the unsettled external environment will be pursued through the six strategic objectives of this strategy and a series of practical and innovative annual implementation plans.



The Children of Carrowbrowne , Galway City Museum, Galway City. **Photograph:** Tamara Eckhardt .

# 4

## How The Creative Ireland Programme Works

### Principles and Values of Creative Communities

Creative Communities will continue to support local authorities as a wellbeing strategy through:

- **Policy:** Working in partnership across government supporting local authorities to deliver relevant local, regional, and national policies and priorities;
- **Practice:** Flexible, cross-cutting Culture and Creativity Teams providing an agile and adaptable approach central to the delivery of *Creative Communities* as it addresses locally-relevant priorities;
- **Participation:** Providing more opportunities for people to engage with and enjoy culture and creativity at local level in ways that underpin equality of access; and
- **Partnership:** Between central and local government, and Fingal County Council and our local culture and creative sectors.

This approach is based on addressing a shared, strategic agenda while delivering on the challenges and opportunities unique to each local authority area.

The *Creative Communities* partnership will be delivered in line with the following principles and values:

- i. Broaden access to, and participation in, cultural and creative activities locally.
- ii. Use culture and creativity as a catalyst for collaboration and innovation in achieving greater wellbeing, social cohesion, and economic development.
- iii. Strengthen the capacity of local authorities to integrate culture and creativity across place-making, regeneration, renewal, and the development of more vibrant, creative, and sustainable places.
- iv. Investing in culture and creativity to support environmental, social, and economic returns that help deliver local authority agendas – from local and regional, to national and international.
- v. Build on the agility and integrated approach of Culture and Creativity Teams to sustain further delivery of targeted collaborative programmes.



Crinniú na nÓg Launch, Galway City.  
**Photograph:** Boyd Challenger.



## 5 The Strategic Priorities for Galway City

### Strategic Objective 1

#### — Access and Cultural Rights

Access to creative opportunities for individual expression and creativity remain a priority for Galway City. All strategies of Galway City Council will support actions and promote engagement of communities and individuals with culture and create opportunities for greater participation of marginalised populations in all aspects of arts and culture. The application of the Public Sector Duty will support this objective.

All actions will be expected to comply with this cross-cutting objective.

### Strategic Objective 2

#### — Creative Youth and Children

Supporting increased participation by younger people in all aspects of creativity and culture. This objective will be achieved by ensuring longer term engagement of young people with Creative Ireland in the lead up to and following on from *Cruinniú na nÓg* as well as the identification of more opportunities for young people, especially older teenagers and young people under the age of 25 to influence the direction of creative activities for younger cohorts and to develop appropriate tools for youth stakeholder engagement, and feedback.

### Strategic Objective 3

#### — Creative Communities

Communities can only become active and empowered in driving and inspiring their own creative journey if they are equipped and resourced adequately to do so. The need for support for animation, project management, and promotion of Creative Ireland projects has been identified as crucial to ensuring that weaker or more marginalised communities are supported to gain more of the benefits from Creative Ireland. The establishment of a system for mentoring and support for communities, and the monitoring of its effectiveness will be developed under this strategic objective.

Ensuring that communities of interest such as ethnic minorities, Travellers, people with disabilities, the homeless and other vulnerable groups are treated equally and do not face exclusion, will be a cornerstone of the whole Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023–2027. This strategic objective will reinforce the priorities identified by the extensive consultation undertaken for the forthcoming Local Economic and Community Plan and those identified by the members of the Public Participation Network.

### Strategic Objective 4

#### — Creative Industries and Cultural Sector

Galway has a strong and established cultural sector, and emerging strength in many of the new creative industries. This objective will support collaborations with the organisations external to the council, as well as identify opportunities that can be led or promoted by the Council's own Economic Development staff, such as support for creative hubs, creative feasibility studies and other initiatives, particularly in the realm of digital creation.

This objective will involve close synergy with the Strategic Arts Plan 2021–2026 “New Directions” to ensure that the distinctive role of Creative Ireland in supporting the activities of the cultural sector is clear and well communicated and complements any other strands of arts and cultural funding.

### Strategic Objective 5

#### — Creative Health and Wellbeing

Amongst the lessons drawn from COVID-19 have been that participation in a cultural and creative life and to have social connectedness are crucial to our health and wellbeing as social creatures. Evidence from activities supported by the Healthy Ireland initiative such as Forest activities, evidence of beneficial outcomes from participation in a range of physical and creative activities demonstrate that this objective is of increasing importance in a post COVID environment.

This objective will seek to add a significant creative element to Healthy Galway initiatives in the community, and seek to identify how the impact of the additional creative element can be evidenced.

### Strategic Objective 6

#### — Creative Environment, Climate Action and Sustainability

Climate change is the critical challenge facing every sector of the economy, and every community. Creative Ireland nationally and the Culture and Creativity team together have a major role to play in encouraging and supporting communities to participate actively in local initiatives to mitigate climate change, and to improve their local environment. The delivery of creative ventures in local communities also needs suitable venues, indoors and out, in which to perform, create or just enjoy culture and heritage. This objective can facilitate actions to improve local neighbourhoods, bring poor infrastructure into new use, as well as partnering communities with climate experts, architects, landscapers and other design professionals to drive positive environmental changes. Projects such as “Línte na Farrage”, “Greening the Lanes” project and the “Use Your Mug” projects undertaken during 2021 could be built on to increase community awareness of and involvement in the climate change conversation.

## 6 Implementation by the Galway City Culture and Creativity Team

Galway City has a Culture and Creativity Team in place to guide and oversee implementation of this Strategy. The role of this team is to:

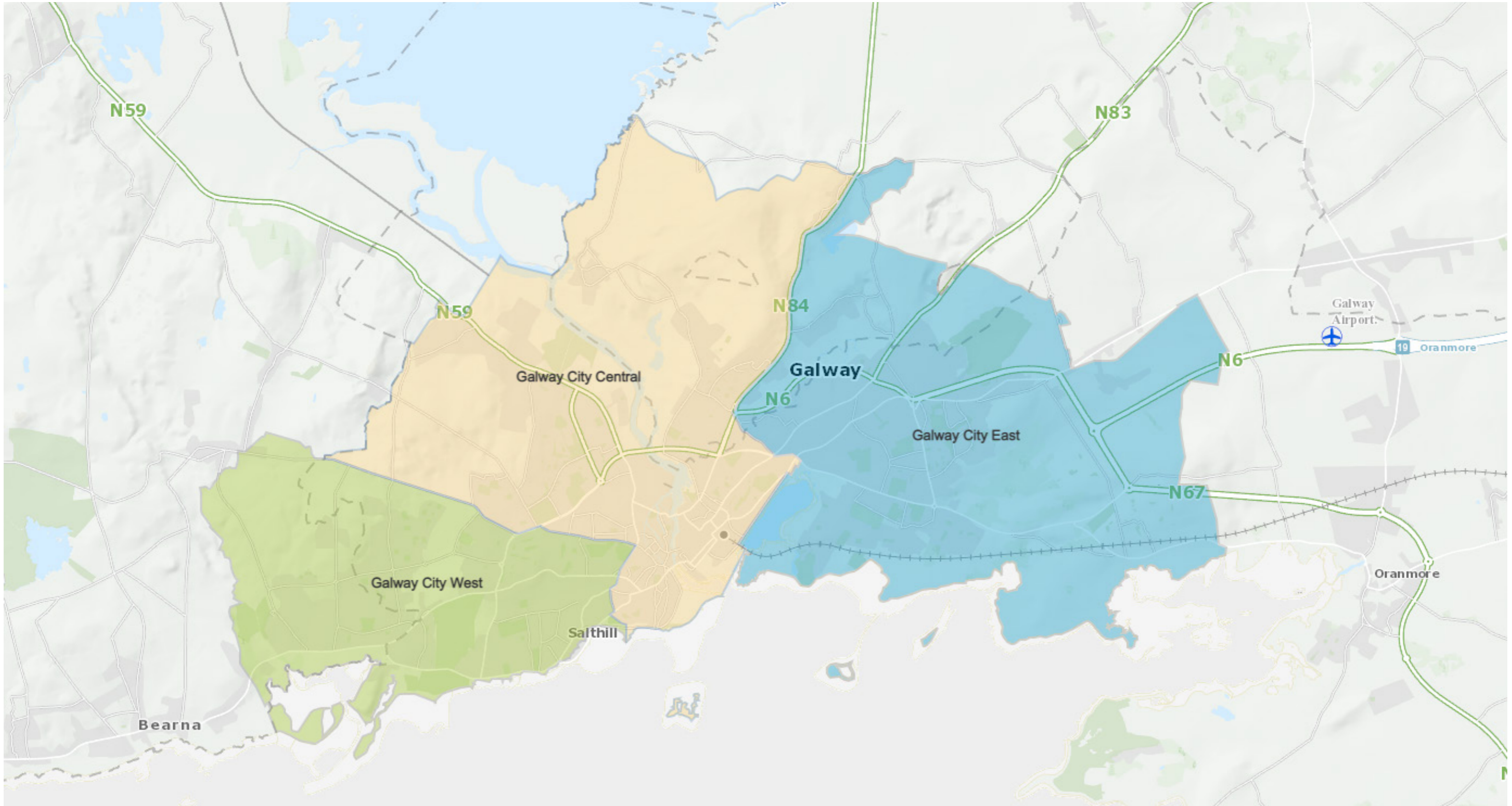
- Provide a collective forum for the ambition of culture and creativity within the local authority.
- Focus on diversity and inclusivity and enable harder to reach communities to participate.
- Build on existing in-house expertise and strategies across areas of wellbeing, social cohesion and economic development to leverage culture and creativity to deliver on targeted local authority agendas.
- Enable a shift in how the creativity and culture sector is valued within and across Local Authorities and ensure that culture and creativity is embedded across local authority plans, policies and project teams.
- Drive cross-collaborative actions that support change and positive outcomes locally, and potentially between local authorities at regional level.
- Be innovative and take risks — try new projects and new ways of working.

The delivery of the Strategy is led by the Director of Services for Housing, Social Inclusion, Ukraine Refugee Response, Economic Development, Community & Culture and the members of the Culture and Creativity Team for Galway City Council include Head of Economic Development, Community & Culture, Head of Recreation & Amenity, Climate Change & Environment, Arts Officer, Arts Development Officer, Head of Programme, Galway Culture Company, Chief Officer, LCDC, Healthy Ireland Coordinator, Communications Officer, Museum Director, Theatre Manager, Heritage Officer, Tourism Officer, Senior Executive Librarian, Local Enterprise Officer, Atlantic Economic Corridor Officer and Environmental Education Officer.

*Cruinniú na nÓg Tech space Aras na nGael, Galway City.*




**Map of Galway City  
Electoral Areas**




---

A Government of Ireland Initiative.  
Tionscnamh de chuid Rialtas na hÉireann.

—  
 CreativeIrl

 creativeirl

 creativeireland

—  
[creativeireland.gov.ie](http://creativeireland.gov.ie)

---

**CREATIVE IRELAND**

*Inspiring and transforming people,  
places and communities through creativity.*