

Summary

The partnership between Visual Artists Ireland and Kerry County Council Arts Office continued in 2021 with an online programme, directed at artists living in County Kerry.

Our 2020 online programme included:

- Managing your accounts (with 1-to-1 clinics)
- How to prepare photos for the web (with 1-to-1 clinics)
- What makes a good artist website (with 1-to-1 clinics)

Our 2021 programme followed that with:

- Digital Identity - Communicating Your Practice Online (with 1-to-1 clinics)
- How to develop creative proposals (with 1-to-1 clinics)
- Visual Artists' Café - Show & Tell (Focus: Co. Kerry based artists)

The purpose of the programme, in keeping with VAI's mission, was and is to create a trusted space where visual artists are valued and have access to supports and knowledge that enable them to develop at all stages of their careers.

The 2021 programme was undertaken against a backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and, alongside the entire VAI Lifelong Learning programme, was delivered entirely online. This brought with it unique challenges as well as new possibilities.

Delivering the programme online enabled us to reach a greater number of artists within County Kerry than ever before. Feedback has revealed that by delivering the programme online we have been able to reach people in more remote areas of the country who may not previously have been able to attend events in person. We were also able to attract a significant number of artists from outside of the core target counties, facilitating cross-county engagement, bringing enhanced networking opportunities and drawing on the experience of a wider group of professionals.

Building on the previous pilot programme, this programme was designed to deliver both national and local strategic objectives through its investment in arts and culture in keeping with *Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027*. The programme tackled two distinct but overlapping aims: developing artists' skillsets so that they are enabled to take advantage of income generating opportunities; and supporting artists in adapting to the new challenges resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. It supported the enhancement of the visual arts, and in particular enables visual artists to develop practical skills, identify opportunities and ultimately contribute to the delivery of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Project Ireland 2040's work to Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities and to Enhance Amenity and Heritage through supporting creativity and opportunities in local areas.

The programme has been designed to meet local strategic objectives as set out within the Creative Ireland Culture and Creativity Strategies. Creative Ireland Kerry set out to

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“work in association with national agencies to ensure there is opportunity for creatives to live and work from Kerry. Supporting the role of creativity in community through creative community funds to support artists and creatives to engage with communities”¹. The programme specifically aimed to assist creative practitioners to bring their work to market, to assist with individual practice development and to secure local, national and international opportunities.²

There are numerous positives that have come from delivering an online programme such as reaching more artists in both urban and rural locations, however there are still opportunities to improve what we offer artists in the area.

The feedback clearly highlighted a desire for artists to connect more deeply with each other so there are opportunities for us to complement our larger shared spaces for themed discussion with smaller more nuanced conversations that help build meaningful relationships. By continuing to develop our digital programmes, we can offer an eco system of support and opportunity for artists where advice and expertise for creative practitioners is offered.³

Outcomes

Statistics

Total number of workshops/events:	5
Total number of places for County Kerry:	85
Total number of places for VAI members:	39
Total number of unsubsidized places:	4

Student	1-5 years	5 – 10 years	10 years +
0%	34.5%	13.8%	51.7%

Total number of places:

	County Kerry	VAI	Other	Total	No shows
Digital Identity - Communicating Your Practice Online	17	13	2	32	9
Digital Identity - Communicating Your Practice Online (clinic)	8			8	1
How to develop creative proposals	31	13	2	46	13
How to develop creative proposals (clinic)	8			8	1
Visual Artists' Café - Show & Tell (Focus: Co. Kerry based artists)	15	13		28	3
Visual Artists' Café - Show & Tell (presenter)	6			6	
Total	85	39	4	128	27

79% of booked places were taken

Number of workshops booked:

	County Kerry	% of total
Single event	36	65.5%
Two events	13	23.6%
Three events	3	5.5%
Four events	1	1.8%
Five events	2	3.6%

¹ Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018-2022 – Kerry: Strategic priority theme 4: Nurturing and Supporting Artists and other creatives.

² Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018-2022 – Kerry: Strategic priority theme 3: Enhancing our cultural profile & infrastructure

³ Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018-2022 – Kerry: Strategic priority theme 3, Programme Priority 23

Total number of individual artists	55	
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34.5% of artists booked more than one event.

Arts office investment in individual artists:

	Region
Arts Office Investment	€3,000
Per Artist	
Single event	€35.29
Two events	€70.59
Three events	€105.88
Four events	€141.18
Five events	€176.47
Average investment per artist	€54.55

An average of €54.55 was invested in each of the 55 local artists that took place in the programme.

Summary of feedback across the programme

	Your programme	VAI 2020 (for comparison)
Number of responses:	29	515
Average Satisfaction (5):	4.48	4.4
Useful & Very Useful (Combined)		
Overcoming challenges	96.4%	85%
Enhancing knowledge & skills	93.1%	(not measured)
Building professional networks	89.3%	64%
Combating isolation	82.1%	78%
Sustaining creativity	96.6%	77%
Developing your career	92.9%	86%
Very Useful		
Overcoming challenges	35.7%	35%
Enhancing knowledge & skills	55.2%	(not measured)
Building professional networks	28.6%	19%
Combating isolation	28.6%	37%
Sustaining creativity	48.3%	29%
Developing your career	46.4%	31%

Summary findings

As shown in the table above, the feedback we received from participants in your programme was aligned to the benchmark set last year from all our events, and in most cases exceeded those figures.

- We received 29 feedback forms across all events and received an average satisfaction rating of 4.48 out of 5.
- 55 Kerry-based artists booked 85 places across all events
- 34.5% of artists booked more than one event
- 79% of booked places were taken up

- An average of €54.55 was invested in each of the 55 local artists that took place in the programme.
- A significant number of places were taken by artists with more than 10 years of experience.

Requests of specific topics from two or more people given in feedback:

- Finance & tax
 - *We have delivered “managing your accounts” but not tax or financial planning*
- 1-to-1 mentoring
- Future trends
 - *This could be explored through artist or curator talks*
- Writing about your work, artist statements & bios
- Writing proposals
 - *This was delivered in our last programme*
- How to write funding applications

Top 10 requests for 2021 across all events:

- How to write funding applications
- Making a website (practical)
- Social Media
- Approaching and working with curators
- Artist talks
- Building professional networks
- E-Commerce
- Online galleries & other platforms
- Working with galleries
- Revenue & Tax

Future

VAI proposes to continue the collaboration in with Co. Kerry Office. Given the likelihood of COVID restrictions remaining in place, as well as the success with broadening our reach in our 2020 and 2021 programmes, we propose that we deliver our next programme online.

We believe there is scope and demand for a programme in 2021/22 that builds on the successes of our recent events. We propose a programme of workshops and cafes that aims to pick up on the feedback we received during our 2020 and 2021 events and also draws on feedback from across the country to identify broader trends. We hope that a new 2021 programme will specifically:

- Help artists build a sustainable career
- Develop new sales opportunities, particularly through online channels
- Explore trends in contemporary art including new technologies and themes
- Deepen professional relationships, both with peers and with other industry professionals.

Programme format

There are two ways we can format the programme:

Standalone sessions

- Webinars + follow-on
 - Follow-on option: Clinics (up to eight 1-to-1 clinics appointments with the tutor)
 - Follow-on option: Workshops (2 hour group discussion for up to 20 people)
- Panel discussions
 - Themed discussion with chair + up to three speakers
- Visual Artists' Café
 - Show & Tell
 - Introducing... local infrastructure
 - Artist studio visits

Each event would be tailored to the local artists' needs. A typical programme of events in this format would feature 5 events including one café, one panel discussion and three webinars with follow on sessions, but could be made up of any events of any type.

Structured programme

A development programme for 8-20 artists. Artists would enrol for the whole programme and would take part in each event. This format is designed to build peer networks and a deeper understanding of topics.

- Introduction to the Programme (VAI)
- Webinars + follow on
 - Follow-on option: 8 max - Clinics (up to eight 1-to-1 clinics appointments with the tutor)
 - Follow-on option: 12 max - Clinics (up to six 2-to1 clinic appointments with the tutor)
 - Follow-on option: 20 max - Workshop (2 hour group discussion)
- Facilitated sharing and discussion event

A typical programme of events in this format would consist of 6 events, including an introduction, 4 webinars with follow on sessions and a final discussion event.

An alternative option for this structure of programme is that the Webinar element could be made open to all, and only the follow on events would be limited to the programme participants.

Topics & Themes

There are two ways to approach building the topics for the programme:

1. Select events based on an overarching theme or development area. Examples of this might be:
 - Entering the art market
 - Creating opportunities
 - Marketing & communication
 - Mastering the web
 - The business of being an artist
 - Generating sales
 - Creative practice
2. Select individual events based on the specific requirements of artists in your area. These events may not be thematically linked.

As part of the learning from the national programme of VAI events, it is also suggested that different experience levels are catered for, so we would hope to include events within the programme that would be appealing to emerging, mid-career and established artists. We would not necessarily advertise them as such, but we should consider that when designing the programme.

Breakdown of Events

Digital Identity - Communicating Your Practice Online

29th June 2021

Bookings

	County Kerry	VAI	Other	Total
Digital Identity - Communicating Your Practice Online	17	13	2	32
Digital Identity - Communicating Your Practice Online (clinic)	8			8

Webinar attendance: 23 (71.9% of booked places)

Clinic attendance: 7 (87.5% of booked places)

Feedback

Number of responses:	7
Average Satisfaction (5):	4.43
Useful & Very Useful (Combined)	
Overcoming challenges	100.0%
Enhancing knowledge & skills	85.7%
Building professional networks	85.7%
Combating isolation	71.4%
Sustaining creativity	85.7%
Developing your career	85.7%
Very Useful	
Overcoming challenges	42.9%
Enhancing knowledge & skills	71.4%
Building professional networks	42.9%
Combating isolation	57.1%
Sustaining creativity	57.1%
Developing your career	57.1%

How to develop creative proposals

27th May 2021

Bookings

	County Kerry	VAI	Other	Total
How to develop creative proposals	31	13	2	46

How to develop creative proposals (clinic)	8			8
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Webinar attendance: 33 (71.7% of booked places)

Clinic attendance: 7 (87.5% of booked places)

Feedback

Number of responses:	13
Average Satisfaction (5):	4.54
Useful & Very Useful (Combined)	
Overcoming challenges	100.0%
Enhancing knowledge & skills	100.0%
Building professional networks	92.3%
Combating isolation	84.6%
Sustaining creativity	100.0%
Developing your career	100.0%
Very Useful	
Overcoming challenges	46.2%
Enhancing knowledge & skills	69.2%
Building professional networks	23.1%
Combating isolation	15.4%
Sustaining creativity	46.2%
Developing your career	69.2%

Visual Artists' Café - Show & Tell (Focus: Co. Kerry based artists)

29th April 2021

Bookings

	County Kerry	VAI	Other	Total
Visual Artists' Café - Show & Tell (Focus: Co. Kerry based artists)	15	13		28
Visual Artists' Café - Show & Tell (presenter)	6			6

Attendance: 31 (91.2% of booked places)

Feedback

Number of responses:	9
Average Satisfaction (5):	4.44
Useful & Very Useful (Combined)	
Overcoming challenges	87.5%
Enhancing knowledge & skills	88.9%
Building professional networks	87.5%
Combating isolation	87.5%
Sustaining creativity	100.0%
Developing your career	87.5%

Very Useful	
Overcoming challenges	12.5%
Enhancing knowledge & skills	22.2%
Building professional networks	25.0%
Combating isolation	25.0%
Sustaining creativity	44.4%
Developing your career	0%