

Arts to Impact Fund 2019-2024

2022 IMPACT REPORT



**RETHINK
IRELAND**

Table of Contents

Introduction to the Fund	3	→
A venture philanthropy approach to scale and impact	6	→
Meet Fighting Words The Fighting Words Scaling Programme	8	→
Meet University of Galway The Active Consent Programme	11	→
Meet Helium Arts The Creative Health Hub Programme	14	→
Meet National Concert Hall The Music in Children's Hospitals Programme	17	→

Meet I Wish The I Wish STEM Project	20	→
Meet Poetry Ireland The Neighbourhood Project	23	→
Meet Children's Books Ireland The Bookseed Programme	26	→
Conclusion	29	→
Thank You to Our Donors	30	→

Introduction to the Fund

The Arts to Impact Fund is a **€3,606,880** 5-year Fund created in 2019 by Rethink Ireland, in partnership with the Department of Rural and Community Development via the Dormant Accounts Fund. The Fund comprises 50% private philanthropic funding, self-raised by seven Awardees. The other half comes from Government, through the Department of Rural and Community Development via the Dormant Accounts Fund.

The Arts to Impact Fund's Objective

The goal of the Arts to Impact Fund is to support the innovative use of arts and culture to improve skills development and promote social inclusion for children, adolescents and adults. Arts and culture have always been important aspects of human civilisation, promoting individual expression and strengthening and bridging communities. We recognise the power of arts and culture to improve lives. Through the Arts to Impact Fund, we are supporting seven of the most innovative projects across the country that are using arts and culture as a means to create positive social impact in Ireland.

The Rethink Ireland Package

Through the Arts to Impact Fund, Rethink Ireland supports seven Awardees with cash grants and tailored capacity building supports to suit the needs of each organisation.

→ Cash Grants

The overall cash grant investment amounts to **€2,705,160** between August 2019 and July 2024. Cash grants are a combination of 50 % private philanthropic funding, self-raised by the seven Awardees, and the other half comes from the Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development via the Dormant Accounts Fund.

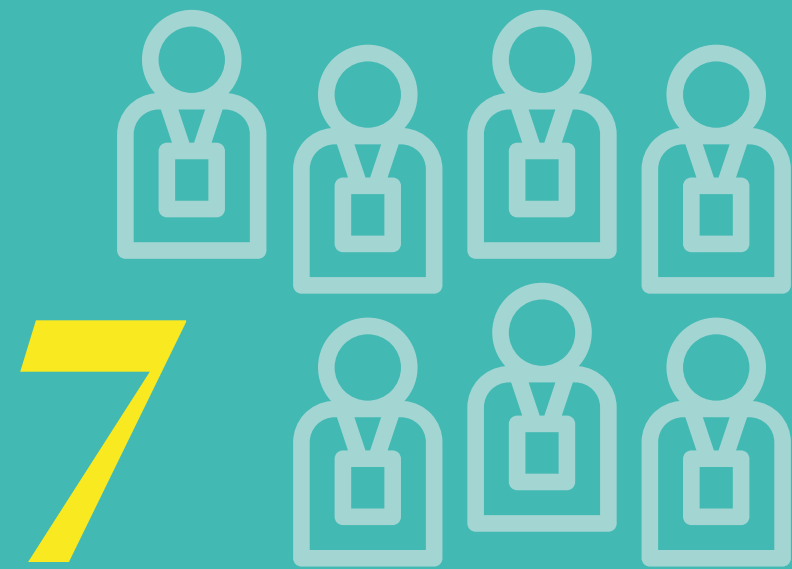
→ Capacity Building Supports

Aimed at strengthening the capacity-building of organisations through tailored consultancy support on key strategic areas and participation in our Accelerator Programme. The total value of these supports to date is **€271,736**.

The *Arts to Impact Fund* backs seven stellar Awardees. These organisations came to the Fund at various levels of organisational maturity and development but with a proven track record of enriching the lives of those they work with.

The Fund supports were uniquely tailored for each of these organisations. This report provides an overview of the capacity-building supports provided by Rethink Ireland and showcases the unique achievements of each Awardee.

Impact Overview



Awardees supported

Awardees successfully transitioned to a hybrid model due to the Covid-19 pandemic



Over
200,000
participants reached



Participants reached:

- Children and youth (Fighting Words, I Wish STEM Project, Active Consent)
- Children with long-term illnesses and disabilities (Helium Arts Project)
- Adults with special needs (Fighting Words)
- Former prisoners and their families (Poetry Ireland)
- People experiencing socio-economic disadvantage (Poetry Ireland, Fighting Words)



new training programmes designed and implemented



Services scaled nationwide and counties

in Cork, Carlow, Dublin, Limerick, Galway and Northern Ireland

A Venture Philanthropy Approach to Scale & Impact

At **Rethink Ireland**, we are committed to supporting the best social innovations to scale and maximise their impact. We do this by using a venture philanthropy model which is a funding method that uses the tools of venture capital investing, alongside grants to support long-term social and environmental impact. Cash grant payments are tied to a number of targets and goals associated with programme delivery as well as strategic areas of growth.

Capacity Building Supports: Rethink Ireland's support to Scale and Impact

Our investment focuses on preparing our Awardees to grow and develop their programmes so that they can maximise their social impact. Through a series of capacity building supports provided by consultants and our Accelerator Programme, we strengthen the organisational capacity of our Awardees in a number of strategic areas.

Strategic Planning, Impact Management and Storytelling were key areas of focus. The strategic planning support came at a time of change due to the pandemic, and this afforded the opportunity to adapt the projects to this new and evolving context.

The Arts to Impact Fund capacity building supports focused on the following areas:

- **Impact Measurement** - A deeper understanding of the social impact and the use of an impact management framework to capture and measure impact metrics consistently.
- **Strategic Planning** - A detailed strategy that sets out their journey to scale over the next few years.
- **Communications** - Powerful storytelling that ensured their true impact was communicated and translated into funding opportunities.
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** - The strengths of ED&I and their relation to a successful project.
- **Governance** - A crucial element of any organisation, good governance was an important area of focus for Awardees.

“The work funded by Rethink Ireland has literally transformed the work we do in Dublin. And I do not use the word transformative lightly.”

- Awardees Exit Interview, anonymous feedback.

“We consider Rethink Ireland as allies and partners rather than just the donor that you need to report to every once in a while. Rethink Ireland have been extremely supportive in our difficult situation over the last 18 months where essentially we haven't been able to deliver on pretty much any of the projects that we said we were going to. So thank you for your kind of support, flexibility and understanding on that.”

- Awardees Exit Interview, anonymous feedback.

The Awardees' feedback cited the following supports as particularly impactful:

- ✱ **Development of strategic plans and a Theory of Change;**
- ✱ **Strengthening the capacity of the project teams;**
- ✱ **Multi-year funding to bridge the pandemic;**
- ✱ **Identifying strengths and weaknesses to maximise their impact.**

Cash Grant Investment

The cash grants provided to Awardees had a meaningful impact on their organisations.

“It gave us confidence. It meant not only did we survive, but we thrived and we developed and grew as an organisation and managed to achieve a lot of what we still wanted to achieve before Covid. The Fund has just been transformational”

- Awardees Exit Interview, anonymous feedback.

MEET FIGHTING WORDS

The Fighting Words Scaling
Programme 2019-2024

Funding Amount: €495,150

Fighting Words provides **storytelling workshops for primary school groups, creative writing workshops for secondary students, summer camps for children and teens and workshops for groups of adults with disabilities.** Participants attend the workshops in community-based locations. All tutoring is free, and workshops are run by volunteers. Fighting Words was set up to make free creative writing programmes available and accessible for all children on the island of Ireland. Children, young adults and adults with additional needs get priority access.



FIGHTING WORDS

The Aim of the Arts to Impact Fund Investment

The main purpose of this funding was to support their art programmes in community spaces around Ireland to reach even more children and young people. Only 47% of children and young people participate in recreational activities after school, and their participation can relate to maternal education and family income¹.

With this in mind, Fighting Words supports children and young people in their communities through their regional outlets, improving their critical thinking and self-esteem and strengthening arts community initiatives. By working with economically disadvantaged communities, they impact the youth considered at risk, their families and those affected by people who have been imprisoned.



“This summer I had an opportunity in Cork to meet with Fighting Words - a unique organisation enabling young people to tell their own stories. It is about using creative writing and storytelling to strengthen our children and teenagers to be resilient, creative and shapers of their own lives.”

- The Taoiseach Micheál Martin gave a keynote speech in December 2021 on the Shared Island Initiative.

Fighting Words Impact Overview



Over
100,000
participants reached since
the beginning of the Fund

Scaled to

22

projects across Ireland,
including three in the
Gaeltacht area



Published

8

books of stories, several
podcasts, and have an
ongoing film recording the
project



Collaborated with The National
College of Ireland's Early
Learning Initiative, Stranmillis &
Queens Universities in Northern
Ireland, NUI Maynooth, Scottish
Universities as well as The
Department of Foreign Affairs
and Garda Community Unit to
reach new cohorts.



These numbers are based on self-reported data shared by the Awardee

MEET UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

The Active Consent Programme
2019-2023

Funding Amount: €1,506,897

The Active Consent Programme is a multi-departmental project affiliated with the Department of Psychology, the Centre for Drama and Theatre, and the Institute for Lifecourse at the University of Galway. A member from each Department has a leadership role. The project provides **relationship and sexual health education in schools, third-level institutions and sports groups, targeting 16-24 year olds**. The project uses primary research and youth-relevant programming (workshops, drama, short films and social media campaigns) to increase awareness and discussions on consent.



UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

The Aim of the Arts to Impact Fund Investment

Few young people receive adequate education about sexual health and receive confused and conflicting messages about sexuality and gender, which contributes to the lack of understanding of what consent is from secondary school to college². We support the Active Consent Programme to enhance its impact with clear and educational training, theatrical plays and toolkits by partnering with higher institutions, secondary schools, sports organisations and health education providers across the country.



“Situations featured were “normal” and grounded, and the focus on “less extreme” cases of mishandled consent I feel are very rarely depicted in most media, so seeing these depicted was very refreshing”

- Male, 22, University of Galway

“Scenes were real, and connected with the audience. I believe the scenes happened at least to someone we know. It helped me see some of my experiences in a different light, thank you”

- Female, 25, Dublin City University

²Council of Europe

Universtiy of Galway Impact Overview



Reached more than

80,000

participants through workshops, trainings, plays, etc.

Produced

3



short films and toured across the country to present them



19

third-level institutions across Ireland hosted their theatrical play for students and staff

Created a podcast called “Green Light” podcast that has reached approximately

6,000

listeners to date



Created a secondary school programme, “How I learned about consent”, that has reached almost

200

pupils to date



Created a toolkit guide for college student services and unions to be used across the country



These numbers are based on self-reported data shared by the Awardee

MEET HELIUM ARTS

The Creative Health Hubs
Programme 2019–2022

Funding Amount: €430,982

Helium Arts addresses the social isolation, mental health and well-being challenges faced by children with long-term, chronic illness. Creative Health Hubs (CHH) developed an “arts on referral” model, working closely with hospital medical staff to refer young patients to Helium’s programme in the community. Helium Arts works in community settings across the country, using filmmaking, music, artmaking and puppetry in partnership with patient support groups and cultural institutions. The project supports **child-led, child-centred creative and play-based interventions, connecting chronically-ill children with their peers and professional artists.**



HELIUM ARTS

The Aim of the Arts to Impact Fund Investment

According to the study Growing Up in Ireland³, children with long-term illnesses and disabilities are far more likely to suffer from anxiety and social isolation and have fewer close friends, which also has an effect on their school time. To bring this group of children together, the Helium Arts project has a child-centred intervention and works in different community settings across the country. Helium Arts bridges the gap between social isolation and many other challenges faced by these children to make friends, learn, play, and improve their capacity to cope with stress.



Children:

“Best part of the week. I love learning new arts and crafts and that it’s specially for children with long health conditions like me. I didn’t dislike anything about the art workshop as it was great. I liked how the teachers explained how to do the tasks and I liked the art they did.”

Parents:

“(She) loved going to the sessions and looked forward to each week. She was very proud of what she made and she had the chance to succeed [on her] own terms.”

“She loved looking forward to the classes each week and had a confidence and a “can do” attitude towards it which doesn’t always happen with extra curricular activities.”

“He is extremely happy, confident and enthusiastic about each day. He is managing emotions in a much better way.”

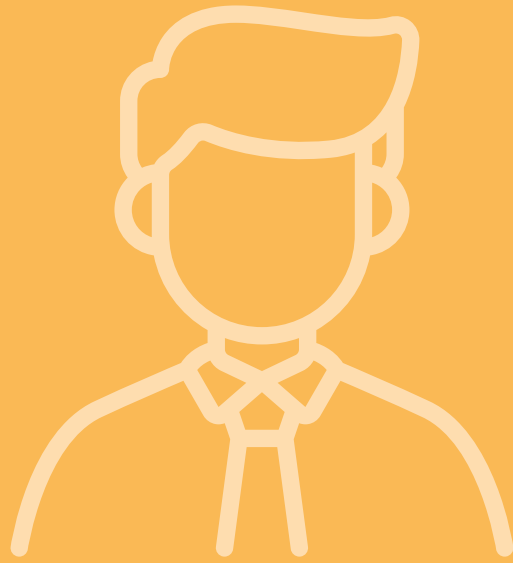


Helium Arts Impact Overview

Hired

4

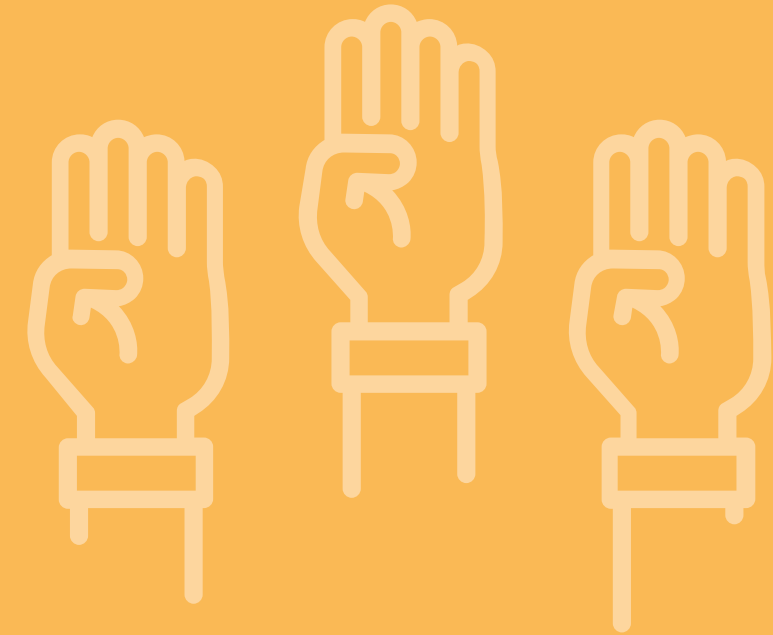
new part-time
staff members



Reached more than

4,500

children across Cork,
Galway and Limerick



Established a volunteer
programme

55

Volunteers completed their
training programmes across
different areas



Secured

5

year funding for their remote
programme and ensured the
sustainability of all their hubs



These numbers are based on self-reported data shared by the Awardee

MEET

THE NATIONAL CONCERT HALL

The Music in Children's Hospitals
Project 2019-2021

Funding Amount: €203,105

The National Concert Hall's Music in Children's Hospitals programme brings **live music by musicians trained to provide music in healthcare settings into the wards, play areas and school rooms of children's hospitals**. Established in 2011, the project provides a creative outlet where children are encouraged to join in, sing and play. The National Concert Hall partners with Kids Classics, a not-for-profit that provides music in healthcare settings.



NATIONAL CONCERT HALL

The Aim of the Arts to Impact Fund Investment

In 2015, an independent evaluation reported that 92% of children liked the music activity provided by the National Concert Hall, and 88% felt happy afterwards, suggesting that music can create a space for children in the hospital to interact and ease their distress, and by consequence their parents' anxiety and stress. This project contributes to reducing the negative effects of fear, stress and anxiety on children in hospitals.

The main purpose of the Arts to Impact funding was to fund the delivery of this programme across different Dublin hospitals and support the continued partnership with National Concert Hall and the non-profit Kids Classics providing music to children in healthcare settings by creating an entertainment space for them.



"It brings big smiles to little faces."

- Senior Nursing Manager.

"We can play music for the children and the staff of the hospital. The children might not be able to interact because of where they are with their treatment, or they could just be very tired. But when their health improves and they have a bit of mobility, we give them percussion instruments and get them to conduct or decide what music they'd like to hear played. With the older children, we often get them to compose their own music. So the musicians are responding to the children, rather than the other way around."

- Hope, musician.

National Concert Hall Impact Overview



Approximately

2,447

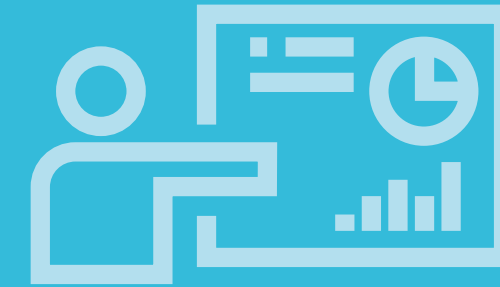
children reached

Delivered their music programme for both patients and hospital staff on more than

3



different locations in Dublin city



CPD training for the musicians participating in the programme



These numbers are based on self-reported data shared by the Awardee

MEET I WISH

The I Wish STEM Project
2019-2021

Funding Amount: €136,713

I Wish addresses the cultural stigma of low female participation in STEM. Through conferences, campus weeks and workshops, the I Wish initiative **inspires female transition year students to consider leaving cert subjects in STEM**, and higher education courses and, therefore, in time, create a cultural shift and female careers in STEM. I Wish holds a unique event every year combining talks and engagement with female role models with interactive exhibition spaces where students engage directly through live experiments and demonstrations at the conference and workshops.



I WISH

The Aim of the Arts to Impact Fund Investment

Highlighting the existing gender gap when it comes to women studying or working within STEM areas in Ireland (and worldwide), the funding contributed to their initiatives across the country to inspire female students to consider leaving cert subjects and higher education courses in STEM. I Wish creates interactive spaces with students in conferences and workshops and, more importantly, to create the cultural shift needed to make way for and inspire female careers in STEM.



“When we look up it is usually men we see. I Wish opened my eyes to a world of possibilities in STEM. I cannot wait to see what the future holds”

- Emma, I Wish attendee 2020.

“The support that you gave was fantastic and so fitting. We knew this year that we had to create a campaign that was visual and appealing as we had no other mechanism. The development of brand guidelines by [Communications NFS consultant] was exceptional it gave us a laser focus on look and feel in our staging set up and social media footprint. You have helped us elevate and we do appreciate it”

- Caroline O'Driscoll, Co-Founder, I Wish STEM



I Wish Impact Overview



6,000

girls attended the IWISH Conference (an increase from 4,000 the previous year)



CREATE IT Zone at I Wish 2019 to showcase the Arts/creativity in STEM or STEAM



Advocated for policy change for STEM education in Ireland. Event launch held in Leinster House where each girl was given the chance to ask the Minister for Education questions live through the platform Twitter



Over

15,300

girls attended the IWISH Virtual Event in March 2021



Mary Robinson launched the IWISH 2021 Event

These numbers are based on self-reported data shared by the Awardee

To see myself, to set the darkne

SEAMUS HEANEY
from *Personal Helicon*

MEET POETRY IRELAND

The Neighbourhood Project
2019–2021

Funding Amount: €99,932

The Poetry Ireland Neighbourhood Project will provide **arts engagement for diverse communities in the north east inner city**. The project builds on the experience and learning from their long-established Writers in Schools Programme, which provides poetry workshops in the classroom. The Neighbourhood Project employed a poet to work with the Poetry Ireland education team to deliver educational programmes in a **community setting**. The poet works with **refugee groups, children, parents and grandparents from disadvantaged backgrounds, ex-offenders, and their families**.



POETRY IRELAND

The Aim of the Arts to Impact Fund Investment

One of the challenges faced by socioeconomically disadvantaged groups is access to cultural and artistic activities, contrary to more advantaged families who are very likely to engage in such activities. This project bridges the gap in creating spaces, promoting experiences in cultural and artistic initiatives in more disadvantaged communities, and bringing artists, children and families together.



"I had written poems in primary school and vaguely remember Soundings. It's refreshing to have a poet join us, set us poetry prompts and challenges, all while giving us encouragement, focus and direction for a new Poetry Group. Thanks Catherine Ann!"

- Richie Keàne, Fatima Poetry Ireland Group

"While a focus on Impact was an organisational priority in our Strategic Plan, and was a key focus as the new Director, the non-financial supports made available by Rethink Ireland has been a real catalyst in moving from 'committing' to 'doing'. The additional financial support will also greatly assist Poetry Ireland to carefully plan but also implement measurement as the company grows in the coming two years".

- Niamh O'Donnell, Director, Poetry Ireland (2021)



Poetry Ireland Impact Overview



5,000

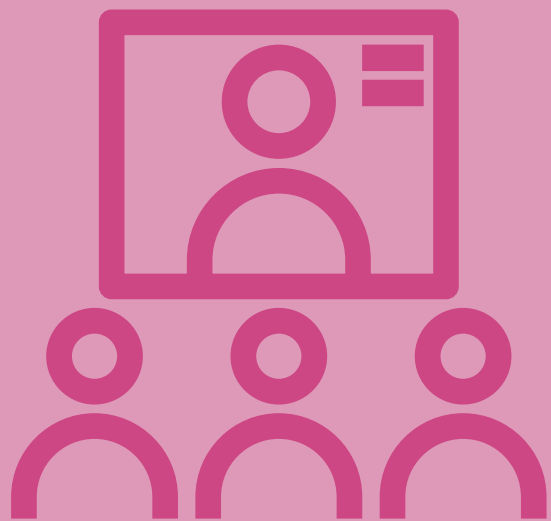
participants engaged in the project



Writer in Residence Masterclasses with Dublin City University Institute of Education's 'Write to Read' Programme for primary schools



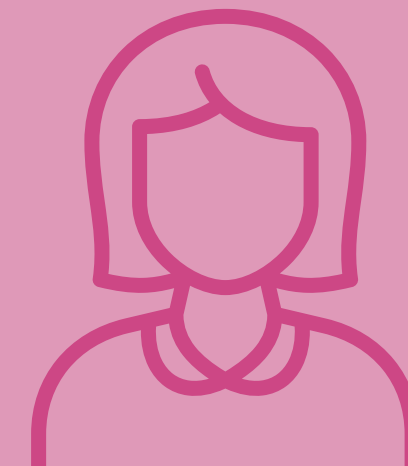
Alphabet Blitz for the City of Dublin implemented



Created the Pathways Programme with people who have spent time in prison



Established a new group, Poetry Vigilantes in Fatima



Recruited Catherine Ann Cullen as the Poet in residence for the length of the Fund

These numbers are based on self-reported data shared by the Awardee

MEET CHILDREN'S BOOKS IRELAND

The Bookseed Programme
2019-2021

Funding Amount: €109,978

The Children's Books Ireland's Bookseed programme addresses lower literacy levels for babies and their families in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of Limerick City and County, including those with high numbers of Travellers. With this in mind, Bookseed raises awareness of the benefits of early reading and breaks the barriers to access readings for babies and their families.



CHILDREN'S BOOKS IRELAND

The Aim of the Arts to Impact Fund Investment

Bookseed makes families aware of the importance of reading with babies in the 1st year of life and provide them with access to books. The project raises awareness of the benefits of early reading and avoids barriers to reading by giving three books to babies in the first year of life and promoting local library services.



“The bond between children and older family members is such a special thing. Sharing a story is another way for children and young people to connect with their grandparents, great-aunts and [great]-uncles and other older people in their lives...”

- Elaina Ryan, CEO of Children's Books Ireland.

“We know from research that reading offers a wide range of developmental benefits for children. In particular, not least it helps develop empathy, builds confidence and expands imagination. We are delighted to have had this opportunity to support our local community with this project and would like to thank the team at Children's Books Ireland for all their help & support.”

- Marie Martin, MSD Carlow Site Lead



Children's Books Ireland Impact Overview



Delivered services to
2,100
participants

More than



2,000

Bookseed packs delivered in
health centres and libraries
across the multiple locations



Connected with West
Limerick Primary Health Care
Project to distribute books to
the local Traveller Community



Opened Book Clinics
across Dublin and Limerick



Facilitator recruitment
and training



These numbers are based on self-reported data shared by the Awardee

Each of the Arts to Impact Fund Awardees **have achieved significant growth in their programmes over the course of their participation in the Fund.** During this time, the Arts to Impact Awardees reached over 200,000 participants across Ireland. Although they work with different cohorts and apply different approaches to achieve impact, **all of them have been successful in improving outcomes for people across different cities.**

More importantly, it has contributed to the **development of skills and promotion of social inclusion for children, adolescents and adults across the country.** It is inspiring to see the feedback and repercussion of the work of our awardees in breaking barriers and making art accessible to all communities.



Thank You to Our Donors



“

“We know that art and culture has the power to engage, educate and enrich people’s well-being. It empowers communities to tell their stories - to themselves, and sometimes also to those who hold power. The programmes and projects supported here bridge the gap between social, environmental and economic barriers to the arts. Together, they have helped drive positive transformation among participants and communities.”

We would like to thank the Department of Rural and Community Development and all of the philanthropic donors who have directly made contributions to the Awardees of this Fund. It is your passionate and generous support that makes the Awardee’s impact possible. The Arts to Impact Fund Awardees have achieved incredible impact over the past four years. I look forward to watching them scale further in the coming years.”

Deirdre Mortell, CEO, Rethink Ireland

**RETHINK
IRELAND**



RETHINK IRELAND

www.rethinkireland.ie

