



**Creativity
Connection
Quality
Incubation
Consolidation**

**the Linenhall
Strategy 2025-2030**



Young audience members at Kyle Riley performance, 2023
Photo by Flávia Renó



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Welcome

Interactive Museum of Languages for Y
by Tomasz Madajczak & Mother Tongu
Photo: Alison Laredo



About this Plan

We asked Mayo residents of all ages what is important to them and how the Linenhall can contribute. Representatives from the groups we spoke with then came together to help us design this Five-Year Plan.

This is not just our plan.

What is important to people?

Rapid change leading to a bigger, more diverse population means people say they feel anxious and unsettled and are seeking stability. They feel disconnected from their communities. Stakeholders and community leaders talk of a lost sense of identity with people feeling disempowered and unrepresented.

Children, young people and adults alike are looking for a safe, appealing space where they can connect with others and be themselves. They want a future where culture is as important as any other aspect of life.

What we do

For more than 30 years we have warmly invited everyone to encounter culture and inspired them to discover their own creativity. We have nurtured Mayo's artists throughout their careers. We make things happen by collaborating with others, which in turn adds value to both their work and to ours.

Our goals

Building on these firm foundations, we have five goals over the next five years:

Creativity - Connection
Quality - Incubation -
Consolidation

"The Linenhall is undoubtedly a vital resource of meaningful art experiences for many individuals and groups. The vibrant connections between communities of art makers, arts workers and diverse audiences who find a welcoming and shared space at the Linenhall underscore its immense importance to the West, and to Ireland more generally."

- Dominic Thorpe, Bolay Residency recipient, 2022



Aftermath: Perpetrator Trauma and the Irish Civil War, 2023
by Dominic Thorpe
Photo: Alison Laredo



"More than just a venue, the Linenhall has become a vibrant community hub and an essential part of Mayo's creative fabric. Its commitment to showcasing cutting edge, contemporary visual and performance art has enriched Castlebar and the wider county's artistic lexicon, offering invaluable experiences to access art and fostering artistic growth through their supportive staff and varied programming."

- Conor O'Grady, artist

All the Men (We Ever Loved) are Dead or Dying, 2024
by Conor O'Grady
Photo: Alison Laredo

About us

Our vision

Communities where everyone can connect and create.

Our mission

Connecting communities, creativity and culture across Mayo so people feel affirmed, valued and healthy.

In 12 months:

- 17,000 people used the Linenhall
- 92% said the Linenhall is important to their local community
- Almost 2,000 under 18s participated in our workshops
- We presented 88 live events and 8 international and national contemporary art exhibitions
- We held 11 professionally curated community exhibitions in our Foyer Gallery
- We provided studios for three professional artists
- Over 40% of all schools in Mayo have been involved in our activities

Our audiences are more diverse than other arts centres:

- More likely to say they identify as D/deaf or D/disabled or have a long-term health condition
- Less likely to say they are from a White Irish background
- More likely to say they have below average incomes
- More diverse than the population*

Our reach

80% of our audiences and participants are from within a 30 to 45-minute drive of the Linenhall.

*Compared to all Irish arts centres participating nationally in Theatre Forum's Audience Insights project 2023

Our values

What we do and how we do it is guided by our values

Quality

We aim to do everything in the best possible way. We use knowledge and experience to offer consistently high-quality arts. And when we don't know, we collaborate with people who do.

Community

We are a social as well as a creative hub. We bring communities together so they can inspire each other and feel connected to their neighbourhood and to the world. We listen. We are influenced, inspired and shaped by our local community members as they engage and experiment along with us.

Inclusion

We believe with all our hearts that participation in creativity can be profoundly life enhancing for everyone in our community. Our door is open – we are an inspirational, supportive space in which to create, with equality and diversity at its centre – no matter who you are.

Collaboration

We are a catalyst, enabler and incubator. We strive to be an excellent partner, easy to work with, amplifying what already happens in Castlebar and Mayo.

Enabling

We support artists and community stakeholders who share our vision of a connected, creative and healthy County by helping them, wherever we can, to deliver their own projects and services.

Bold

We are not afraid to think big, try new things and create opportunities for others to test their own ideas.

"The Linenhall is a resource that is always encouraging and fabulous"

– Stakeholder/Partner



Nora, Naomi and Melanie perform at Mayo Africa Day, 2023
Photo: Alison Laredo

Creativity

We want everyone to value creativity as part of their life, engaging their hearts as well as their minds to enhance wellbeing. **We want** to inspire people by connecting them with artists and their work. **We want** to continue to nurture artists throughout their careers, from childhood experiences that embolden them to create and become artists, to pivotal career opportunities that enable them to become professional artists, and the long-term supportive relationships valued by established artists.

To achieve this we will:

- Further develop the Linenhall's role as Mayo's cultural beacon, programming high quality arts events across all genres that connect people with professional artists and their work.
- Continue to work with partners to ensure the underserved and vulnerable in our society can engage in cultural activities and enhance wellbeing through their own creativity.
- Make creativity visible to everyone by developing or participating in community celebrations that spill out onto the streets of our towns and villages.
- Continue to maximise the reach and impact of our highly respected schools workshop programme, investing in the development of the artists that deliver it.
- Help existing and new partner organisations include creativity in their programmes with a particular focus on the lives of children and young people outside the school environment.
- Continue to work in close partnership with artists to further develop the ways in which we support them.
- Deepen our relationship with existing audiences, visitors and participants.

How will we know we have succeeded

People say they feel a greater sense of pride in and connection with creativity in their communities.

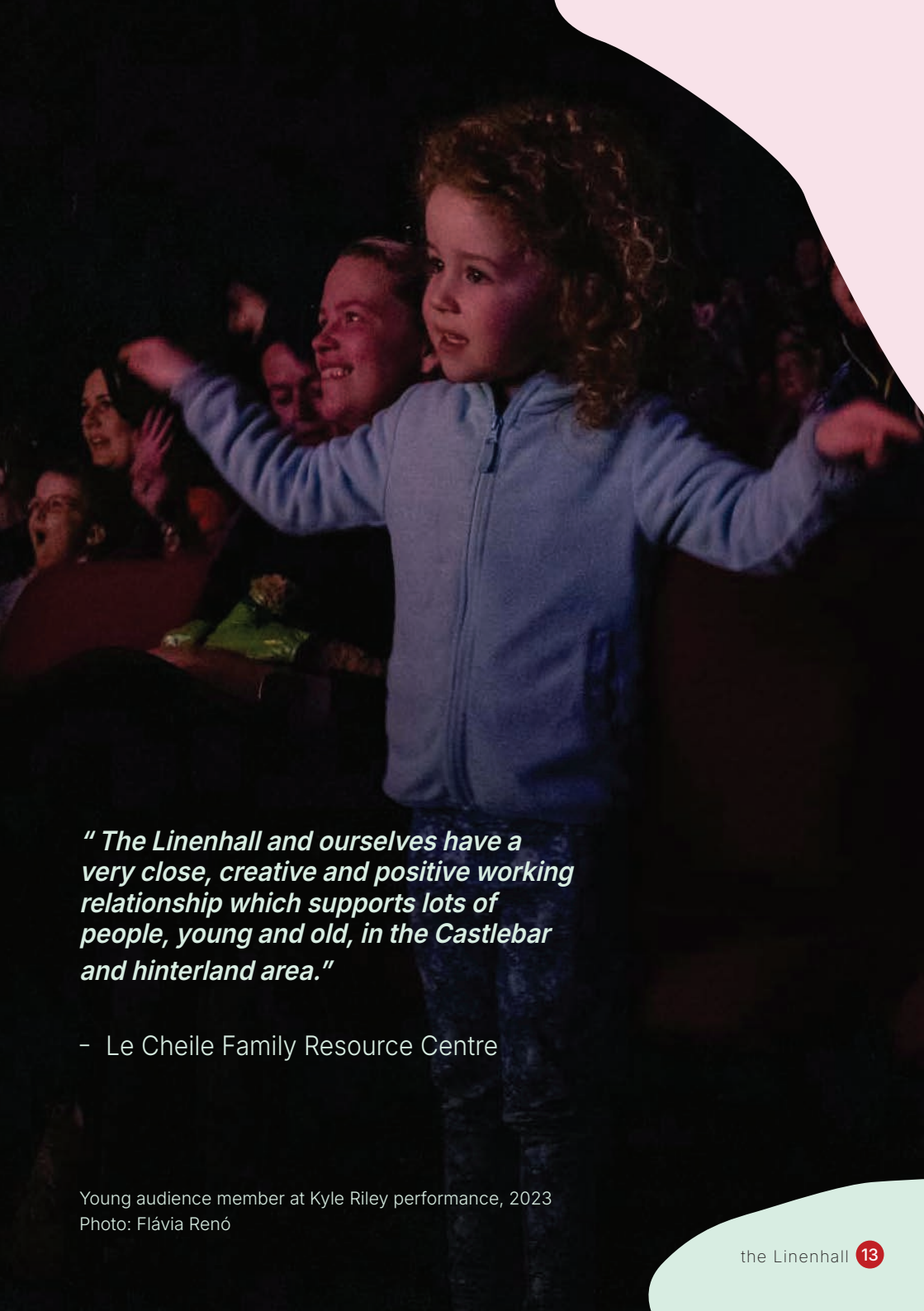
Underserved and vulnerable Mayo residents have engaged in cultural activities and say their sense of wellbeing has improved.

We have supported partners in adding creative strands to their programmes.

We have sustained both the number of young people involved in the schools' workshop programme and the depth of their engagement.

Artists continue to say they value the Linenhall's support and audiences.

Visitors and participants are more engaged with our activities.



" The Linenhall and ourselves have a very close, creative and positive working relationship which supports lots of people, young and old, in the Castlebar and hinterland area."

- Le Cheile Family Resource Centre

Young audience member at Kyle Riley performance, 2023
Photo: Flávia Renó

Connection

We want to continue to develop our building as a safe, social and inspirational space in which everyone feels they belong. **We want** to stay connected and relevant to the communities we serve by listening and responding to what matters to them.

We want to connect artists with each other, with audiences and with their communities.

We want to help people connect with their own identity and enable stronger connections between communities, celebrating Mayo's diversity.

To achieve this we will:

- Make the most of our intimate spaces to create experiences where artists and audiences feel a genuine connection.
- Create a safe space that empowers young people to connect, explore and grow.
- Work with partners to showcase and celebrate a wide range of cultures, recognising and valuing artists from different backgrounds, building on the success of previous projects like Mayo Africa Day and the programme developed with International Protection Applicants and Displaced Peoples.
- Continue to embed Irish language events and activities in the programme.
- Celebrate and build on Roola Boola's Childrens Arts Festival position as one of Ireland's leading festivals for children.
- Connect people with their area's heritage and history through our building's story.
- Together with Mayo's community groups and, in particular, our community partners, create a wider range of entry points to the Linenhall as a social and creative hub.
- Explore ways of providing a financially sustainable hospitality offering that better supports the Linenhall's creative and social goals.
- To the greatest extent possible, make a cohesive, powerful use of the frontage of the building to communicate playful imagination and signal the Linenhall's role as a beacon of creativity.
- Enhance our marketing to ensure people across our catchment know about everything we do.
- Contribute to making artists' careers more sustainable by enabling them to develop additional income streams under the umbrella of the Linenhall.
- Map our strategic, operational, active and dormant partnerships to identify where they can be enriched or renewed and where new relationships are required to help us achieve these goals.

How will we know we have succeeded

Artists and audiences talk about the connection between them.

Young people say they feel more empowered, connected, creative and confident.

Artists from diverse backgrounds say they have been recognised and celebrated.

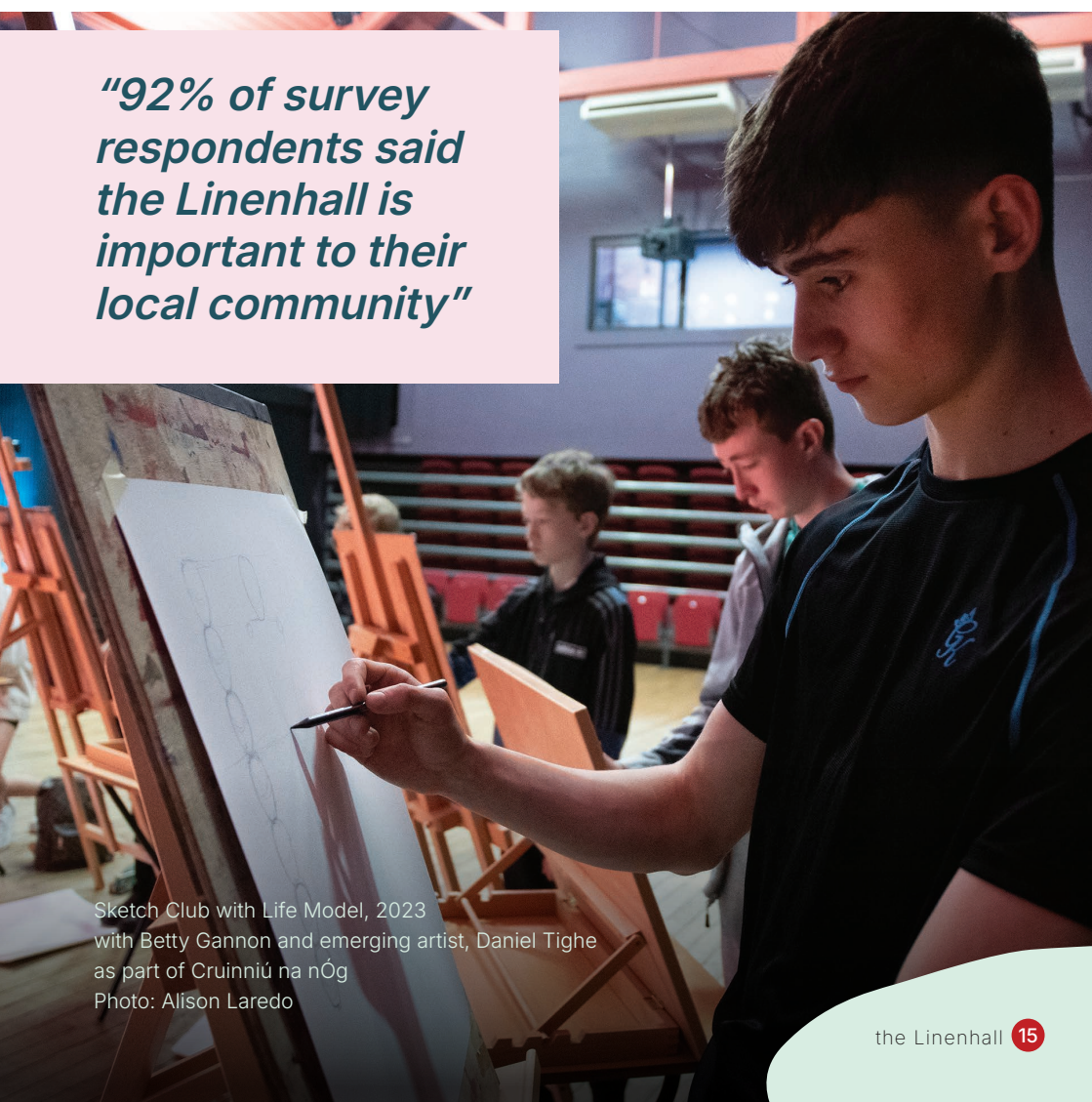
People say they are more aware of diverse cultures.

Local communities say they feel more connected with their area.

People across the catchment are more aware of the full range of the Linenhall's activities.

Participating artists say they have more sustainable careers.

"92% of survey respondents said the Linenhall is important to their local community"



Sketch Club with Life Model, 2023
with Betty Gannon and emerging artist, Daniel Tighe
as part of Cruinniú na nÓg
Photo: Alison Laredo

Quality

We want to work with others to ensure high quality creative and cultural experiences are within easy reach of everyone in Mayo. **We want** to be the lead arts centre in Ireland for active community participation in creativity and the arts. **We want** children and young people from all backgrounds to be inspired by the best artists to discover their own creativity.

To achieve this we will:

- Continue to involve artists, children and young people in the development of our programme of activities and events.
- Listen and respond to audiences, visitors, participants, residents, artists, partners and stakeholders to ensure the continued quality and relevance of what we do.
- Ensure we have effective systems in place through our front-of-house and backstage team to deliver a safe quality experience.
- Make the most of learning opportunities to improve our impact.

How will we know we have succeeded

Artists and young people feel they have a strong influence on our programme.

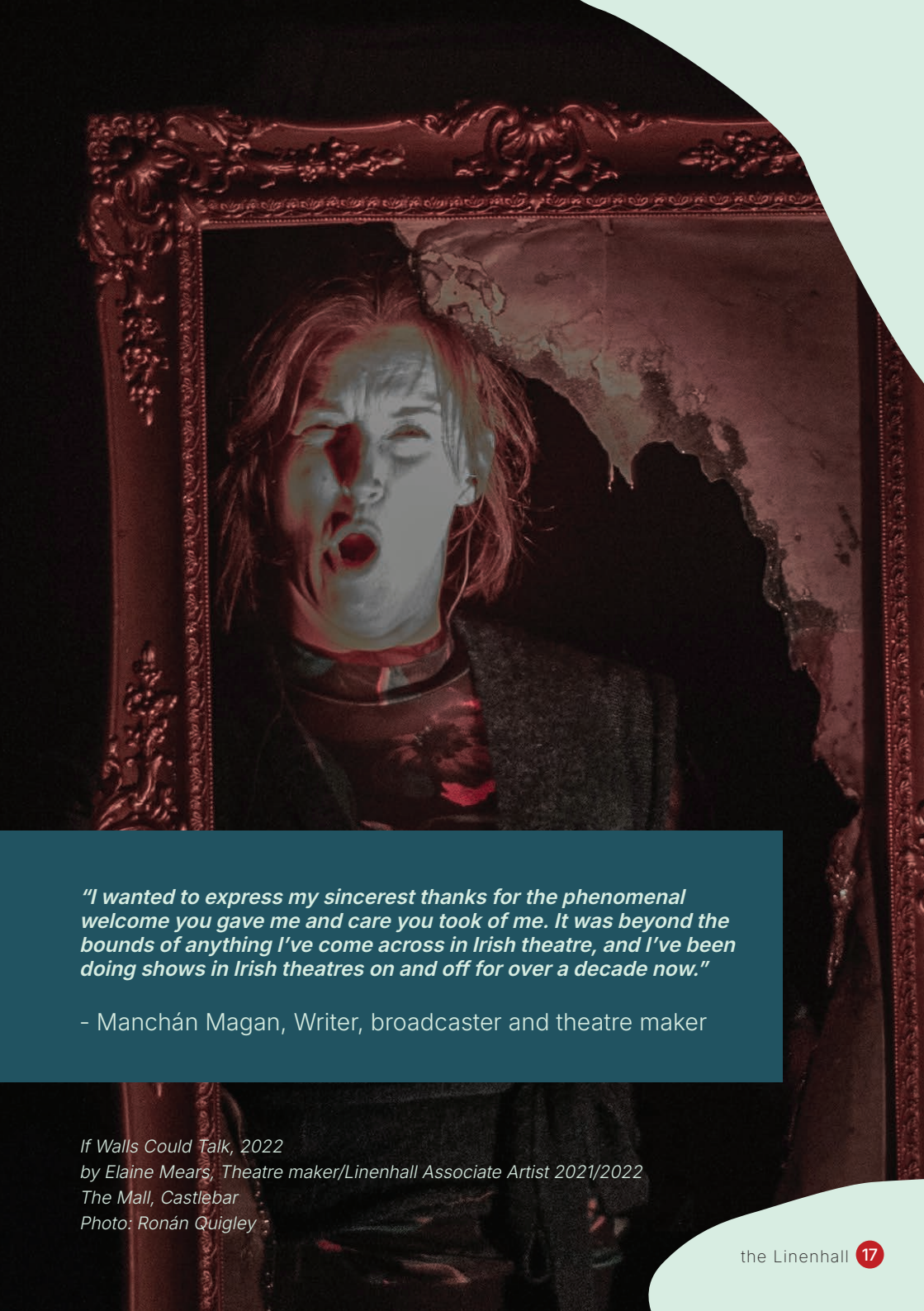
We have built on the engagement developed through the co-design process by setting up effective systems for gathering and reviewing the views of a representative sample of all those who engage with us.

Review our systems frequently to ensure that experiences of a high-quality have been achieved.

Team members have implemented changes that have improved the impact of their work in response to learning opportunities.



Family Art Sessions, 2025
Photo: Flávia Renó



"I wanted to express my sincerest thanks for the phenomenal welcome you gave me and care you took of me. It was beyond the bounds of anything I've come across in Irish theatre, and I've been doing shows in Irish theatres on and off for over a decade now."

- Manchán Magan, Writer, broadcaster and theatre maker

If Walls Could Talk, 2022

by Elaine Mears, Theatre maker/Linenhall Associate Artist 2021/2022

The Mall, Castlebar

Photo: Ronán Quigley

Incubate

We want to work strategically with others to make even more things happen by being receptive, nurturing and caring. **We want** to continue to be a safe space for experimentation where ideas can take root, grow, and when they are ready, become independent. **We want** to test new ways of growing creativity and connection within and between Mayo's communities.

To achieve this we will:

- Continue to support artists through ambitious residencies and year-round programming, by pushing our building to the limits in making spaces available for creation and ensuring artists know we are available to enable, support and hire them to bring their ideas to fruition.
- Play a key role in rebuilding and expanding the Mayo Arts Collaborative.*
- Continue to enable our partners to plan and implement their own projects.

How will we know we have succeeded

Artists continue to give positive feedback about their relationship with the Linenhall.

The Mayo Arts Collaborative is an effective network, playing a strategic role in the County.

Partners and stakeholders say the Linenhall is easy to work with and value their partnership with us.



*Mayo Arts Collaborative is a network of five catntres in Mayo: Áras Inis Gluaire, Belmullet; Ballinglen Arts Foundation, Ballycastle; Custom House Studios and Gallery, Westport; Ballina Arts Centre; the Linenhall, Castlebar.



"This Plan reaffirms the Linenhall's identity and purpose as a trusted, resilient and valuable resource in creativity and connection. It sets a properly ambitious course in participation, collaboration and programming to initiate and nurture, to enhance and inspire."

- James Harold, former Arts Officer for Galway City Council and Galway County Council

Inside Outside, 2022
feat. musician Paul Dooley
Photo: Mary Callaghan

Consolidate

We want to help strengthen all the communities we serve. **We want** to help consolidate the future of the arts in Mayo. **We want** to make the Linenhall stronger for future generations.

To achieve this we will:

Our partners

- Build on the co-design process that delivered this Five-Year Plan to engage with community stakeholders who share our vision of a connected, creative and healthy County and supporting them, wherever we can, to enhance their own projects and services.
- Work as a key player in the Mayo Arts Collaborative to conceive and incubate an ambitious cultural vision and strategy for the County to be delivered collaboratively.

Our building

- Secure the Linenhall building fabric in the short and medium term.
- Develop a coherent plan to render the entire building fit for purpose as a creative, cultural and social hub.

Our governance

- Ensure the Board of Trustees demonstrates leadership and best practice in governance across all their responsibilities. Prioritise diversity, sustainability and succession to ensure diverse perspectives and a varied skill set across the Board.

Our finances

- Assess feasibility of reducing the Linenhall's reliance on a small number of funders.
- Develop stronger strategic relationships with the Arts Council and Mayo County Council.
- Reduce reliance on hospitality offering as our handshake with the community
- Develop a realistic fundraising strategy, implementable within existing resources and focused on local small businesses and the framework of the Friends scheme.

Our team

- Ensure the Linenhall can continue to engage in-person with all who want that human connection.
- Develop the team so that workloads are sustainable.
- Mitigate the impact of the national recruitment crisis in the arts by focusing on staff retention. This includes extending the use of job shares where appropriate, working towards paying a living wage that takes into account the high cost of housing in Mayo and reducing financial insecurity by making pension contributions.

How will we know we have succeeded

We have reviewed our existing and potential partners, identified and engaged with those that share our goals and values and they value their relationship with us.

The Mayo Arts Collaborative has developed a cultural vision and strategy which has been adopted by its members.

The required restoration of the building fabric has been completed.

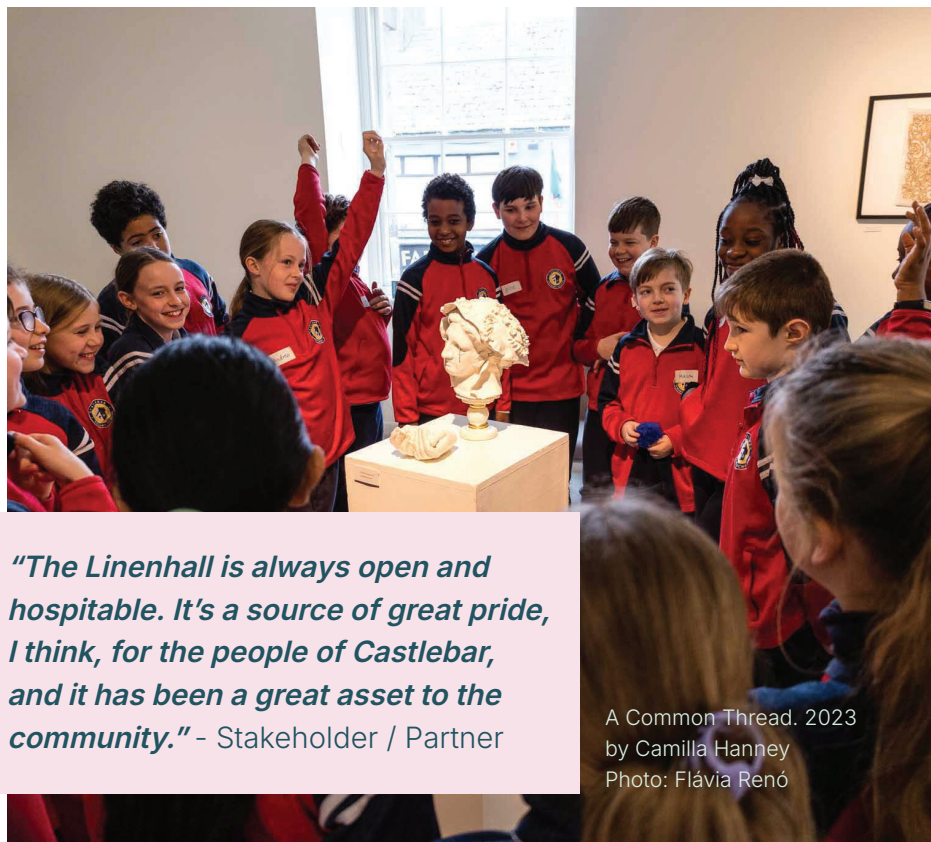
A coherent long-term plan for the building has been developed and is being implemented.

The Linenhall has developed stronger strategic relationships with existing funders and has broadened its funding base. Its fundraising strategy has been implemented and is meeting income targets.

The team believe their workloads to be manageable and staff turnover is reduced.

The hospitality offering is financially stable while audiences, participants and visitors continue to say that they feel welcomed and included.

The overall experience of attending and participating in events is still rated highly.



"The Linenhall is always open and hospitable. It's a source of great pride, I think, for the people of Castlebar, and it has been a great asset to the community." - Stakeholder / Partner

A Common Thread. 2023
by Camilla Hanney
Photo: Flávia Renó

Who we listened

Active listening has been an integral part of generating this Plan and the Linenhall is the first arts centre in Ireland to co-design a Strategic Plan with our stakeholders. The Plan was developed with Arts Consultant Heather Maitland.

We held focus groups with: artists; primary school children; young people; frequent and occasional attendees and participants; stakeholders and partners; the Linenhall team; the Linenhall Board of Trustees.

We had informal 'tea and chats' with: Creative Schools; Fighting Words Mayo; Foróige; Fret Frenzy; International Protection Applicants/Direct Provision; the Irish Speaking Community; Mayo African and Ukrainian Communities; Parents and Infants; School Refusal/early School Leavers; Tusla Foster Care; UBU Projects; Western Care; Women from the Traveller Community; a MSLETB Youth Officer; Youth Work Ireland.

Our Visioning Workshops included representatives from: The Arts Council of Ireland; Castlebar's Business Community; Castlebar Chamber of Commerce; Castlebar Men's Shed; Castlebar Municipal District; Count Me In; Creative Ireland Mayo; The Flourish Project, The Family Centre; Fighting Words Mayo; Le Cheile Family Resource Centre; Mayo County Council; Mayo County Library; Mayo International Protection Centre; Music of Mayo; Music Generation Mayo; Music Network; Music West; MSLETB; South West Mayo Development Company; Western Alzheimers Mayo.

We are grateful beyond words for the contribution of everyone in our community towards this Plan.

Along with the Linenhall's co-Directors, the Board of Trustees will focus on how we can sustainably and effectively meet your needs over the next five years, whilst providing access to excellent creative experiences, and deepening our stakeholders' connection with the Linenhall.

"I was struck by the extent to which the Linenhall is at the heart of, and integral to, the life of the people of Castlebar. The diversity of its offering across the visual, musical, theatrical, cinematic, performance and literary sectors ensures that every interest is catered for. Most impressive of all is the constant through flow of school going children gaining their introduction to the arts, learning about so many modes of artistic expression and having the chance of exhibiting their own works."

- Cathy Dorman, artist



Step Away Closer, 2024
by Cathy Dorman
Photo: Alison Laredo

**Connecting communities,
creativity and culture across
Mayo so people feel affirmed,
valued and healthy.**

Cover image:

Music at the Garden Gate, 2021
John Hoban and Isabela Chabuquita Hoban
in partnership with Mayo Arts Service
Photo: Sean Reynolds



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo
Mayo County Council



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Linenhall Street
Castlebar
Co. Mayo
F23 AN24**

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