

BELFAST 2024



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

2. HERITAGE, CREATIVITY ET DIVERSITÉ
7. CULTURE, URBAN PLANNING AND PUBLIC SPACE
9. GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE

**ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, GOVERNANCE, PUBLIC SPACE,
ATTRACTIVENESS, PROMOTION, DIVERSITY, CREATIVITY,
JOBS, TOURISM**



1. Belfast and culture

Belfast is the capital city of Northern Ireland and the cultural heart of the region. Its strengths include creative industries and artists, digital innovation, film and TV, cyber security, FinTech, sciences, manufacturing, engineering. With a young population of 342,560 it also has huge talent across film, animation, music, gaming and TV sectors. Belfast has over 80 diverse festivals, street art, great spaces for music, theatre, comedy, craft, visual art and dance. It was awarded UNESCO City of Music in 2021.

The Belfast's cultural strategy 2020-2030, A City Imagining promotes full political and citizen commitment, and citizen participation and activation is a central focus and priority of all the city's cultural strategy outputs and goals, aligned with the city's main Community Plan, the Belfast Agenda.

BELFAST 2024 IS A MAJOR CULTURAL PROGRAMME WITH 200 EVENTS ACROSS 24 PROJECTS.

2. Goals and project implementation

2.1. Main aim and specific goals

Belfast 2024 is a major cultural programme with 200 events across 24 projects, and a 'Creative Me' civic activism programme, to improve culture and arts participation, and access to celebrate identity for all. It will humanise city challenges through thought-provoking moments and compelling experiences, changing mindsets and releasing new meanings.

Its specific goals are:

- » Making Belfast a welcoming, caring, fair and inclusive city – leaving no one behind.
- » Creating a liveable and connected, vibrant and competitive city.
- » A city that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable.
- » A diverse city with vibrant public and cultural spaces.
- » A city where creativity pushes boundaries.
- » Strengthening Belfast's positioning in national and international tourism markets.

2.2. Development of the project

Belfast 2024 presents ambitious, participative workshops, performances and creative projects, celebrating our homegrown culture, creativity and the city. Belfast City Council is investing £6 million to deliver the city's biggest ever creative and cultural celebration, with a programme of world-class spectacle events and community-led activities.

All political parties came together to approve the investment and programme, which follows extensive civic engagement since we developed our bid for European Capital of Culture in 2017, as well as a programme of co-creation on how best to showcase Belfast's many diverse and unique cultures.

People, Place and Planet are the key themes in a programme of 24 large-scale commissions, that will bring over 200 events, workshops and activities to Belfast to December 2024. Most of the programme has been specially commissioned following an open call to the city in 2022/23. The programme will provide a financial boost to the cultural sector, supporting jobs and creating new opportunities for people to access and participate in arts and creativity, encouraging visitors into Belfast and showcasing the city as a global destination for culture.



**BELFAST 2024 PRESENTS AMBITIOUS, PARTICIPATIVE WORKSHOPS,
PERFORMANCES AND CREATIVE PROJECTS, CELEBRATING OUR
HOMEGROWN CULTURE, CREATIVITY AND THE CITY.**

Together we want to imagine, dream and invent; to speculate and investigate; to learn and experiment; to imagine a new future, new spaces, a new balance with nature, new stories and new experiences. Belfast 2024 includes:

1. Inception of idea, planning of themes aligning with Cultural Strategy and Belfast Agenda city priorities. Budget identified and confirmed to proceed.
2. Pre-planning and design of Belfast 2023. Co-design of themes, vision and open call criteria alongside key stakeholders, civic groups, and creatives via workshops and meet-up salons. Identification of key partners and vision.



3. Further negotiation of budget and establishing key partners. Scoping new governance model alongside key partners. Team members employed. Workshops and engagement commences (from April) at 2 Royal Avenue and with groups under 'Creative Me' umbrella including community takeovers. 56 workshops events and almost 300 individual engagements delivered during this time.
4. Co-designed open call launched. Belfast 2024 soft launched as a concept and call to civic action. 'Creative Me' participation-focused community-based events ongoing and expanding to neighbourhoods. Evaluation framework design initiation with university.
5. Open Call commissioning process completed. Projects research & development, co-design. Evaluation framework design and implementation. Ongoing 'Creative Me' engagement including design of creative participatory budgeting scheme the Bank of Ideas, to empower citizens to collectively propose and decide on ideas during the year. Marketing and Communications plan development.
6. Stakeholder and partner funding and agreements. Operational, legal and financial arrangements across programme; ongoing engagement 'Creative Me' project. Target 14,000 individuals engaged. Target 130,000 audience. Soft launch and engagement; partnership work; press & media campaign; national and international presentations.
7. Programme delivery – over 200 audience focused events. Production and implementation – Marketing and Communications plan. Reporting and evaluation; legacy planning; future culture governance structures.

The programme has been developed in collaboration with civic partners, strategic partners and supporters, project delivery partners, and funder partners. We are also hosting delegations from international networks to support Belfast 2024 and its delivery and evaluation and legacy.



3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

Over 10,000 people so far across the city, region, UK and island of Ireland have been involved in the development and delivery of the programme and its messaging has travelled globally.

The programme has enabled much-needed communication on gender, equality, human rights, new communities, issues around access to public space, and climate change. It has also challenged local cultural organisations and creatives to reconsider their function and role within the city, while breaking down silos between council departments and external bodies.

New governance structures and ways of working have enabled new conversations on cultural participation towards effecting positive change for our people, place and planet. Our elected members have a greater understanding of the local diversity and creativity, and the ability to effect change through bringing people together through culture.

Moreover, we have a bank of stories (and are building a bank of data) already about the programme's profound impact on people's lives and happiness, breaking down barriers between people. We look forward to sharing the details and methodology with other cities.

BELFAST 2024 HAS CHALLENGED LOCAL CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS AND CREATIVES TO RECONSIDER THEIR FUNCTION AND ROLE WITHIN THE CITY, WHILE BREAKING DOWN SILOS BETWEEN COUNCIL DEPARTMENTS AND EXTERNAL BODIES.



3.2. Evaluation

Methodology in partnership with local university and relevant organisations and actors includes participatory research circles, sector salons, workshops, interviews, journals, peer review, data analytics to capture qualitative and quantitative data. Indicators in this regard are organised as follows:

| Outcome cluster | Indicators |
|-----------------|--|
| Belonging | Connection, Pride |
| Challenging | Vibrancy, Green consciousness, Power |
| Creating | Quality, Opportunity, Investment, Innovation, Collaboration, Diversity |
| Exploring | Reputation, Visitor experience |

3.3. Key factors

We have developed an outline of 'what success will look like' through asking people and organisations involved in Belfast 2024. These are some of the indicators articulated:

- » Cultural participation and implementation of culture within city development (physical, social, economic) will have more prominence and relevance within the city and region's strategies.
- » Equality and diversity are more accepted and better celebrated in Belfast through greater exposure and celebration.

- » Human rights issues around identity, expression and resource are talked about and challenged through the projects.
- » The diverse programme gives everyone the ability to participate in civic and cultural life of the city.
- » Climate change messaging makes a difference to people's actions and we make meaningful change to the city's landscape, and ensure a more sustainable future.
- » Greater investment for creatives and those working in the cultural sector.
- » Resources for culture (spaces, places, materials) are shared more fairly and justly.
- » Belfast's diverse and unique cultural identity is known more positively throughout the world and we have more pride and respect as a people emerging from division and conflict.

3.4. Continuity

Belfast City Council will give continuity and legacy to Belfast 2024 and create proofs of concept to show other cities how to effect systematic change:

Organisational

- » A 'cultural compact' place-shaping group will expand the programme' governance structure which will benefit from delegated authority which has been test-driven by Belfast 2024.
- » Better relationships between council departments will ensure culture has greater prominence strategically and operationally.

Technical

- » A council-led meanwhile use capital fund is supporting several cultural spaces for Belfast 2024 and commercial premises are partnering as host venues. This is a 'proof of concept' for future working.
- » Departments such as procurement, planning, building control, capital projects, parks, communities better understand the needs and opportunities of cultural actors and organisations.

Financial

- » There is potential enhanced council and partnership investment in cultural programming and associated resources / structure – discussions indicate a possible uplift of +40%.
- » Our major City Deal project, Belfast Stories is a supporting partner in Belfast 2024 and will invest in and host content and projects beyond 2024.
- » 2 Royal Avenue our city centre shared space is the hub of Belfast 2024 and is likely to benefit from greater investment to continue and expand its civic engagement role.

4. Further information

Belfast was a candidate for the sixth "UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award" (November 2023 – March 2024). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June 2024, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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