



CARLOW  
ARTS  
FESTIVAL

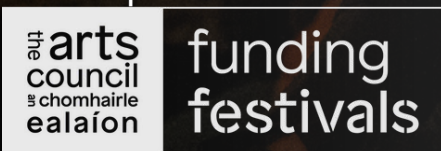
# ARTISTIC Director & CEO

## APPLICATION PACK

Application deadline: September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2025

Position starting date: January 2026

Principal Funder



Supported by



# CONTENTS

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- **INTRODUCTION**
- **ABOUT CARLOW ARTS  
FESTIVAL**
- **OUR HISTORY**
- **OUR MISSION**
- **OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**
- **OUR PROGRAMMING  
FRAMEWORK**
- **THE ROLE**
- **HOW TO APPLY**

# INTRODUCTION

**Carlow Arts Festival is a cornerstone of Ireland's cultural life. A vibrant, multi-disciplinary arts festival held each June in Carlow town. Founded in 1979 as Éigse Carlow Arts Festival, it has grown from grassroots beginnings into one of only seven strategically funded, multi-disciplinary festivals supported by the Arts Council. As the first major festival of Ireland's summer season, it welcomes over 20,000 visitors annually and presents a dynamic programme spanning visual art, theatre, dance, circus, spectacle, music, film, and literature. With a reputation for innovation and ambition, the festival regularly premieres new work, attracts international artists, and champions creative exchange, while remaining deeply rooted in its community and accessible to all.**

**Carlow Arts Festival is now seeking a new Artistic Director & Chief Executive Officer to lead the organisation into its next chapter. This is an exceptional opportunity for a visionary cultural leader to shape the artistic programme, nurture partnerships, and strengthen the festival's position as a vital force in the Irish cultural calendar. The Artistic Director & CEO will provide both creative and executive leadership, balancing artistic ambition with financial sustainability, while working closely with the Board, staff, funders, and stakeholders to ensure the festival continues to thrive and inspire into the future.**





## **ABOUT US**

**Carlow Arts Festival is an annual multi-disciplinary arts festival which takes place in Carlow each June and is the first of the summer arts festivals in Ireland. Each year we present a kaleidoscopic programme of works by local, national and international artists working across a variety of art forms including dance, street arts, spectacle, literature, circus, visual arts, film, music and theatre.**

**We also work with artists and communities throughout the year across the county to create new work. This year-round work informs, reinforces, diversifies and strengthens our annual festival programme by ensuring that it is current, responsive and relevant to the needs of the artists, communities and audiences that we seek to engage and support.**

## OUR HISTORY

Formerly Éigse Carlow Arts Festival (Éigse meaning ‘a gathering by poets’), Carlow Arts Festival began in 1979 as a community initiative, celebrating Irish heritage through Irish language, poetry, music and dance.

For its first decade, the festival was run by a core team on a voluntary basis. Among the most active organisers were Bride de Róiste (Irish language), Deirdre Brennan (English and Irish poetry) and Fr. Kevin O’Neill (visual arts). A central aim was to make the world of arts more accessible for the local Carlow community and to provide a platform for local artists and craftspeople to display publicly.

In the 90s, Éigse continued to depend on volunteer committees but began to focus less on the Irish language and more on the visual arts, with an upscaling of the programme and the addition of several international artists.

This focus on visual arts and presentation of international work paved the way for the realisation and construction of the VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art & The George Bernard Shaw Theatre - one of Ireland’s leading contemporary art centres, which opened in 2009. VISUAL is one of the festival’s longest established presenting partners along with Carlow College St. Patricks.

In 2002/2003 the first professional director was appointed as the festival started to move into a more professional era with a renewed focus on a multi-disciplinary programme and in 2013 the festival changed its name to Carlow Arts Festival.

Carlow Arts Festival has continued to evolve and is now one of only seven strategically funded multi-disciplinary Arts Council funded festivals in the country and a highlight of the Irish cultural calendar. The mission of the festival remains the same: to make art accessible to everybody.

## OUR MISSION

To promote culture in all its forms. To be a driving force in inclusive festival making. One that weaves world class art into local people's lives in meaningful, impactful, ongoing and transformative ways. To bring diverse communities together around art that connects them – with themselves, each other, the wider world and opportunities for growth and progress.

## OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Sustained commitment to artistic excellence and art form development.
- Inclusion and participation as an intrinsic goal, and a commitment to investing in the long-term, often invisible work of participation, collaboration and engagement with our local community.
- Opening up Carlow physically by using more of Carlow as our stage, and continuing to build on our central commitment of access to great art for everyone.
- Ensuring our organisation remains fit for purpose by strengthening our partnerships, increasing our financial resilience, growing our fundraising capacity and skills and capabilities in the digital arena.
- We choose transformative art, diverse perspectives and inclusion for all in the act of discovery.
- We embrace the world of virtuosic artists to resonate, inspire and collaborate with our community.
- We champion accessibility while introducing our audiences to new art forms and cutting-edge work.
- We create a vibrant temporary community that opens horizons: creating space for discovery, delight and disruption.
- We insist that the arts are for everyone.





## **OUR PROGRAMMING FRAMEWORK**

We take a three-strand approach to artistic programming. This enables us to better identify and understand the specific needs of the people with whom we are aiming to engage. This structured and focused approach offers artists, audiences and our community collaborators multiple access points, or ‘ways in’, to our programme and enables us to facilitate valuable exchanges across these programming strands. This supports us in developing new audiences for our festival by building awareness of our programme throughout the entire year.

### **1.Festival**

#### **Artistic Programme**

Our festival offers our audiences access to a kaleidoscopic programme of new and existing works by local, national and international artists. It will provide a critical platform for the presentation of new work by artists supported through our artist development programme, ORIGIN. New works created by our community collaborators as part of ASSEMBLY, our engagement and participation programme will also feature.

Our festival offers audiences a variety of ways in to a rich and diverse programme that traverses art forms, contexts, themes, ideas, cultures, spaces and mediums; reflecting a contemporary Ireland and positioning it within a wider global context. This is essential to how we engage and develop audiences in the long term.

## **2.ASSEMBLY**

### **Community Engagement**

Through our ASSEMBLY programme, we engage a diverse and broad demographic of community collaborators in the creation of new work. Participants from across Carlow County are invited to develop and take part in a variety of arts activities that are delivered on a year-round basis.

The artistic outcomes of these projects are presented in both local community and public spaces outside of the festival period, and as part of our June festival. This encourages people from across the county to visit the Festival HQ site in June and engage with the wider programme. Our volunteer programme also sits within this programming strand and offers our community collaborators an additional way into the festival by committing their time, skills and abilities to the delivery and development of the festival, on a voluntary basis.

## **3.ORIGIN**

### **Artist Development**

Our ORIGIN programme supports the development and presentation of new work by artists who make portable and ecologically aware work for unconventional public spaces, whether indoor or outdoor.

Key art-forms include dance, street art/performance, spectacle, and cross-disciplinary experimental and/or collaborative works. ORIGIN provides a supportive environment for creative risk-taking. Works nurtured and developed through this programme are platformed as part of our annual June festival.





## **The Role**

**Working closely with the Board of Directors, the Artistic Director & CEO will lead Carlow Arts Festival with vision, ambition, and drive. They will shape and deliver a bold, multidisciplinary arts programme, forge powerful relationships with artists, funders, sponsors, and the community, and ensure the festival remains artistically daring, financially secure, and organisationally robust. Balancing bold artistry with strong leadership and lasting legacy.**

**Partnering with the Executive Producer, who leads on finance, operations, and organisational systems, they will form a dynamic senior leadership team that balances creative ambition with operational excellence, ensuring the festival continues to thrive. As the public face of a small, passionate team, the Artistic Director & CEO will inspire through visionary leadership while also rolling up their sleeves to deliver - especially in the high-energy moments of the festival itself.**

# KEY RESPONSIBILITIES



## Leadership, Finance & Planning

- Lead the organisation in partnership with the Board, developing a clear strategic plan and vision for both artistic direction and organisational sustainability.
- Ensure the organisation operates transparently and accountably, meeting the expectations of the Board, funders, sponsors, and key stakeholders.
- Motivate and support a small, dedicated team, fostering a culture of collaboration, care, and professional development.
- Oversee the overall budget with the Executive Producer, balancing ambition with financial resilience, and explore innovative approaches to income generation.
- Ensure effective systems are in place for governance, compliance, and reporting, in line with the Charities Governance Code.
- Ensuring the company's compliance with the Charity Regulator's Governance code
- Risk Management

## Artistic & Programming

- Conceive and deliver a distinctive, daring, and inclusive artistic programme rooted in excellence, innovation, and accessibility, reflecting the identity of Carlow.
- Oversee planning and delivery of the festival in collaboration with the Executive Producer.
- Build meaningful artistic partnerships locally, nationally, and internationally.
- Develop opportunities for community participation and for artists to create and present new work.





## Marketing, Advocacy & Profile

- Provide leadership in developing the festival's marketing strategy and creative campaigns.
- Ensure strong media and public relations activity to position the festival nationally and internationally.
- Serve as a compelling public advocate for the festival and the arts across multiple platforms.
- Act as a key communicator with the Board, artists, contractors, funders, and the wider public.



## Partnerships & Stakeholder Engagement

- Actively pursue new sources of income, including public funding, sponsorship, and philanthropy, while nurturing existing supporter relationships.
- Build sustainable partnerships with arts, cultural, educational, and community organisations at local, national, and international levels.
- Act as the primary liaison with the Arts Council Ireland and other strategic partners.
- Everything we achieve at Carlow Arts Festival we do on a modest turnover and with a small team. The Festival's current budget is €455,000 and we were successful in increasing Arts Council Ireland investment to a revenue grant of €235,000 in 2021





## Person Specification

We are seeking a dynamic, visionary leader with at least five years' experience in senior management role and a proven track record in both artistic programming and organisational leadership. The ideal candidate will bring:

- A creative background as a producer, programmer, or artist, recognised for artistic vision and the ability to communicate it compellingly.
- Strong knowledge of the Irish and international cultural sectors, with wide-ranging networks.
- Experience developing and delivering innovative, ambitious artistic programmes combining local and international work.
- An affinity with the mission, values, and ambition of Carlow Arts Festival.
- Experience in site-specific or artist development contexts is desirable; knowledge of street arts and circus is an advantage.
- Excellent relationship-building skills, with the ability to act as a connector and bridge-builder across communities and sectors.
- Experience working with Boards of Directors, with demonstrable governance awareness.
- Evidence of strategic planning, financial management, and budget oversight.
- Ability to thrive under pressure and deliver results within tight deadlines.
- Excellent communication and media skills, with confidence in a public-facing role.
- Proven influencing and negotiating skills.
- A commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion across all aspects of the festival's work, reflecting our organisational values.
- Willing and able to make Carlow their home base.
- A strong working knowledge of Carlow's arts and cultural landscape, including awareness of its key stakeholders, institutions, and community networks.

# HOW TO APPLY

**To apply for this role, please submit the following: to [andy@carlowartsfestival.ie](mailto:andy@carlowartsfestival.ie)**

- A current CV outlining your career history and key achievements.
- A supporting statement (maximum two pages) describing your interest in Carlow Arts Festival and how your skills and experience align with the essential criteria outlined in the Person Specification.

If you have access requirements and wish to apply in a format other than written CV and statement, please contact [andy@carlowartsfestival.ie](mailto:andy@carlowartsfestival.ie) to discuss alternative application methods.

We are committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and warmly welcome applications from candidates of all backgrounds, including those currently underrepresented in the arts sector.

## **Data Protection Notice**

Your personal data will be processed solely for the purpose of progressing your application for this position. Beyond the recruitment team, your information will only be shared with the designated shortlisting and/or interview panel. In line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), your information will not be used for any other purpose and will be destroyed in accordance with Carlow Arts Festival's Data Protection Policy.

## **Conditions of Employment**

- Contract: Full-time
- Application Deadline: September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2025 @5pm.
- Interviews will be held in late September/early October, with the successful candidate being informed by mid-October.
- Starting Date: January 2026
- Salary: €55,000
- Location: Carlow, Ireland
- Contract: Four year initial term with option to extend
- Pension: Employees may join the company pension scheme after 12 months in post, with an employer contribution of up to 5% of gross salary.
- Probation: Six (6) months
- Notice period: Three (3) months (after successful completion of probation)
- Vetting: The successful candidate will be subject to Garda Vetting in accordance with the requirements of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012–2016.
- Shortlisting will be based on the criteria outlined in the Person Specification, and those selected will be invited to interview.