



A beginner's guide to

# CREATING A SUCCESSFUL YOUTH ARTS RESIDENCY



Guidelines for youth workers from the  
national youth arts programme



## National Youth Council of Ireland

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is the representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. It represents and supports the interests of voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people.

[www.youth.ie](http://www.youth.ie)

## National Youth Arts Programme

The National Youth Council of Ireland's Youth Arts Programme is a partnership approach to promoting and developing youth arts in Ireland. It is a strategic partnership of the NYCI, the Arts Council and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

[www.youtharts.ie](http://www.youtharts.ie)



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# INTRODUCTION

"The condition of others was a challenging process, and in places became quite messy, but I think that was the fun of it: what came together was beautiful in spite of and because of the obstacles of collaboration."

Daniel, a member of Redbird, Artist in Residency 2015



## Foreword

Working effectively with another person, group or organisation on an arts project can be a rewarding experience. Good relations and effective communication are key to a project's success. We are all familiar with the work we do, and how we do it and we presume everyone understands. But alas, they don't. The other person or organisation will have different ways of working and perhaps a different focus on the importance of elements of work in a partnership project. Time needs to be put into working out what you as a youth worker want for your youth group and explaining that to the artist. Effort needs to be made to plan a project that your youth group would like, find the right artist and gather the support needed for the plan to succeed.

This guide has been written to support you to run an artist in residency project. However, the advice offered could serve as a guide for any partnership work you wish to undertake. If you know what you want to do and how you want to do it, make time in the project plan to review and reflect and problem solve with all stakeholders, then chances are your project will succeed.

I would encourage you to be kind to yourself in a new endeavour, translating an idea into action is challenging. Inevitably there will be significant learning on the project and you may fail with some aspects of the programme, however, you will build wisdom for the next one.

Wishing you every success,

Niamh Dillon  
NYCI Arts Programme



# WHAT IS A YOUTH ARTS RESIDENCY?

A youth arts residency is usually a process that enables an artist to work with a group of young people over a specific period of time. There can be many reasons for a youth arts residency but a strong element of the process is usually to encourage artistic collaboration between a professional artist and a group of young people and hopefully within this process to create an environment of creativity, learning and exchange between everyone involved.

# 2



"Time to trust my instincts and close my eyes and leap".

Note from one of the participants on the residency in 2015.  
**UP Cork, Artist in Youth Work Residency 2015**

"I think it exceeded our expectations for both staff and participants involvement. It has had a definite knock on effect for Merlin Park CAMHS centre, and will encourage more artistic practices and projects with participants there."

**Redbird, Artist in Youth Work Residency 2015**

"In terms of behaviour and contributions we saw people in the group become a lot more motivated than usual in terms of self direction and initiative. Many of those who were previously reluctant made progress along the way when it came to sharing new ideas, expressing themselves or sharing their experiences. Overall, almost each young person developed in some way - gaining more confidence in themselves and as active group members."

**UP Cork, Artist in Youth Work Residency 2015**

"Parents' feedback was particularly positive, with one saying that this project is a huge positive influence on her son's social life and skills, and that the artist is brilliant with the young people. Her son ponders over becoming an actor, something never mentioned before."

**Gort, Foróige Club, Artist in Youth Work Residency 2015**

# 3

## THE SEVEN MOST USEFUL THINGS THAT YOU WILL NEED TO DO, WHEN DEVELOPING A YOUTH ARTS RESIDENCY!



### 1. Do your research

Interested in a youth arts residency but don't know how to get started? There is lots of information and examples of work that has taken place both across Ireland and internationally online. Allocate yourself some time in front of a screen and start exploring.

### 2. Ask for help

If you have an idea for an arts residency but you've never done this before, talk to someone with experience and get their advice and feedback. (For more information about resources that you can access see page 14 of this document).

### 3. Know your group

Communicate with the young people that you're working with and try to gauge their interests, level of experience and confidence. Knowing your group's strengths and weaknesses can be the key to creating a successful residency.

### 4. Plan well in advance

Funding, venues, partners, supports, all these things can take a while to organise so figure out what you need to do and put a realistic timeline in place.

### 5. Choose your artist carefully

If the residency is going to be successful, you have to have a good working relationship with the artist involved. It will help immensely if you get on well with the artist that you hire and it is also important that you like and admire their work. (Remember, even if they don't say or show it, the young people will be looking to you for guidance!).

### 6. Know what your goals are

Make sure they're realistic and attainable and communicate them to everyone involved. Remember, it's important to have small goals as well as large, to give your group a sense of achievement throughout the project.

### 7. Document and evaluate the process

It's essential to record what your group has done and why they've done it. You'll find it useful in all sorts of ways. (see page 13 The Importance of Evaluation).



# GETTING STARTED

# 4

So let's start at the beginning... You have a group of young people that you think would benefit from participating in an arts process. Maybe they participate in lots of arts activities and you have something particular in mind or maybe their experience of the arts is very limited and you want to give them a positive introduction to something that you feel will be a meaningful experience for them.

## Here are some questions that would be useful to ask yourself before you start!

Many of these questions are explored in more detail in *Creating Magic: A Handbook for Developing Arts Projects with Young People* (available on [www.youtharts.ie](http://www.youtharts.ie) or from NYCI)

### 1 What?

**What do you want to achieve?** Identifying clear and realistic goals for a residency is a really important way of ensuring that your residency will succeed.

#### What are the needs

What are the needs of the group that you have in mind? To identify those needs you might have to use a couple of different approaches:

##### Example:

Talk to your target group; assess their needs and interests with the leaders who work with them. Create a profile of the work that the group has engaged in to date. This should give you a good idea about the type of programme that the group are ready for.

**Remember:** While it's great for a group to self-determine their direction within a process, sometimes they need guidance. It can be very difficult for a group to identify an art form or a way of working if they have never experienced it.

#### What are your comfort zones

What are your comfort zones and how open are you to pushing beyond them? Engaging within an arts process can be a challenging process and not just for the young people in the group. The success of a residency can be very dependent upon how supportive the leaders are to engaging in the process also.

**Don't expect the young people to do anything that you're not prepared to do yourself.**





## 2

### How?

**How are you going to achieve your goals?** Assessing the goals for a youth arts residency is no different to any other youth work programme. Are they realistic? Attainable?

#### Example:

Conduct a SWOT analysis (look at the Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats that you think are relevant to this project), if you're not sure or you need advice, try to find someone who has experience of this type of work and ask them.

### How long

How long should the residency be for? This will very much depend on the experience level of the group. In many cases it might be worth exploring something for four or six weeks before committing to a longer term process.

### How many

How many young people will participate in the residency?

### How much

How much money do you have? Or how will you access funds to pay for the residency? This will have a significant impact on the duration and ambition of the residency that you envisage.

## 3

### Who?

#### Who will benefit

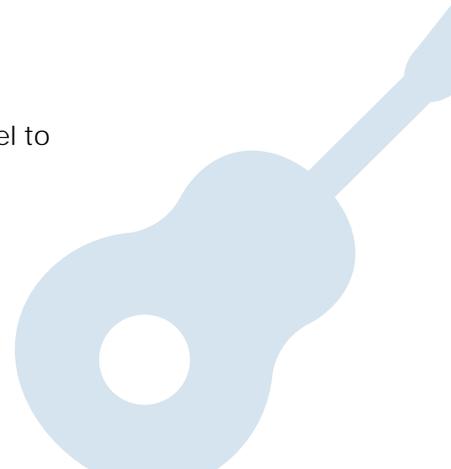
Who will benefit from this residency taking place? Remember a successful residency can have an impact far beyond that of the participating group.

#### Who will deliver

Who will deliver the residency? The correct choice of artist(s) is paramount to the residency's success.

#### Who will support

Who will support the residency? Identifying the correct personnel to support the residency can determine its success or failure.



# THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE YOU START!

# 5

We all know that if possible, it's a lot better if we can solve problems before they arise. Here's a few pointers to think about in advance of your residency.

## 1. The time factor

Artists and organisers of residencies always say that they could have done with more time. Calculate what time you think you need for your residency and increase it by a third or if you can't increase the time span, be realistic about the workload that you can deliver. **Remember you will always need more time!**

## 2. Communicate early

Have clear conversations between all partners, making sure that all involved can deliver the strand of the work that they have committed to. It's better to troubleshoot in advance of a project taking place than to have to solve problems as they arise.

Create a clear contract between partners.

Try to ensure that organisational agreements are signed off by the manager of each partner organisation and that they are fully briefed on the project about to take place.

Do your utmost to ensure that a strong culture of respect is created between partners from the very beginning of the project.

## 3. Do your homework

You need to know what might affect the running of your project in advance of it taking place.

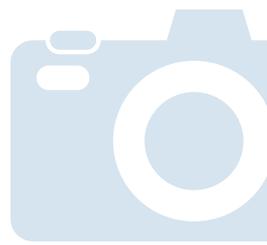
### Example:

Should the young person who is doing his/her Leaving Certificate with a massive amount of commitments to other activities really take the lead in your play? (even if they are perfect for the part!).

Familiarise yourself with what is going on locally for young people;

### Example:

Having a clearer understanding of the influences affecting the young people in the local area, will help you to deliver a better residency. This of course could be a wide range of things - from the impact of exams or the school musical on your project to the broader social or economic realities of the community that you're working in.



## 4. Consistency

Try to work with the same people throughout the project. If you're lucky enough to have volunteers involved, try to accurately predict the time commitment that they can give to the project and create a realistic schedule that reflects people's actual availability.

## 5. Supports

Try to identify appropriate supports for volunteers before the project begins.

### Example

Do they need an induction meeting? Do they need child protection training? What costs might they incur when supporting the project e.g. travel or childcare; is there any way that the project can make a contribution to those costs?

## 6. Scheduling

- Create a schedule that's flexible: try to identify the times that suit the group you are working with.
- Create a calendar of events in advance of the project taking place to minimise any absenteeism.

## 7. Communication

- Make clear to all the young people what involvement in this project might entail.
- Receive a commitment to the project from both young people and parents in advance of the process beginning.
- Communicate to participants the consequences of not showing up. (E.g. explain to group members: how their actions can affect other people).
- Communicate with parents if the issues being explored with the young people are topics that they may have concerns about.
- Know your own goals for the project and communicate them effectively.

## 8. Group dynamics

- Try to ensure that the project is bigger than any one individual who might be participating in it.
- Give the group a goal to focus their participation.
- Create a contract with the young people.
- Know the limits of the project. Don't stretch the expectations of the young people. Keep it real.

## 9. Roles and responsibilities

- Create clear contracts at the start of the residency.
- Identify the roles and responsibilities for each person involved in the project.
- Acknowledge that roles can change and evolve within a process and discuss this possibility in advance of the residency taking place.

# IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT ART-FORM AND ARTIST FOR YOUR GROUP

# 6

## Art-form

1. Has the group ever participated in an arts project before?  
The experience of the group will have a significant impact on the art form that you choose and the type of artist that you employ.

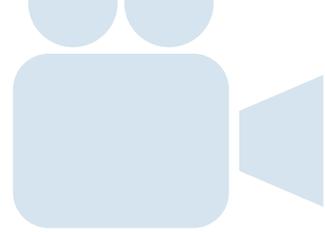
If the group has limited experience of the arts, it's probably worth starting the process with an art form that feels safe to them and doesn't leave individual members of the group feeling too exposed or vulnerable.

### Example:

If you or your group has limited experience of engaging in the arts, sometimes photography can be a good art form to start off with as it is something that young people will be familiar with. This can provide a feeling of safety to the group and still enable the young people involved to express their creativity.

2. What type of group are they? Are they confident? Extrovert? Gentle? Thoughtful? Do they work well as a team? Do they look out for each other? What range of needs do they have? (the answers to these questions should hugely impact on your choice of art-form).
3. What kind of things does the group like doing? Can these interests be channelled into an arts project?





## Artist

1. What experience does the artist have of working with young people?
2. What experience does the artist need to have to work with your group?

### Example:

Maybe your youth group has completed a lot of arts projects and there will be a lot of support within your organisation to employ a talented new and emerging artist to work with your organisation or on the other hand maybe your youth group has a lot of needs and you will want to identify an artist with a lot of experience who knows how to significantly support an organisation in effectively delivering a residency.

3. Do you like the work that the artist creates?
4. Do you think the young people that you work with will get along with the artist?
5. What supports will this artist need during the residency and can your organisation deliver that level of support?
6. How flexible is the artist?
7. Does he/she have public liability insurance?
8. Can you afford to pay the artist that you have identified appropriately?



# WHAT THE ARTIST NEEDS TO CONSIDER BEFORE DECIDING TO WORK WITH A GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE

# 7

1. Have the young people participated in an arts project before?
2. What do the young people want from the residency?
3. What does your potential employer want from the residency?
4. In your opinion are the goals that the group have identified realistic?
5. What supports will be in place for you during the residency?
6. What approach does the organisation have to working with young people? Is this approach compatible with your way of working with young people?
7. What is the organisation's child protection policy?
8. Can the organisation pay you appropriately?
9. What will be the terms and conditions of your employment during the residency?
10. Will participating in this residency support your creative and professional development?



# 8

## DEFINING A SUCCESSFUL YOUTH ARTS RESIDENCY!

"You know a residency has been successful when you start planning the next one straight away."

Artist in Youth Work Residency participant 2015

A successful residency may be a difficult thing to define, however, according to some of our most recent residency veterans, if you're delivering a project that ticks some of the following boxes, chances are you can probably call the work that you have been doing a success:

### You know it's a successful residency when...

- 90% of those participating have had a positive experience during the process.
- You can see that the young people who have been participating in the project have experienced a journey of growth and development from the start of the project to its conclusion.
- You see that friendships have been formed.
- You receive positive feedback from the different communities that are connected to the residency participants schools, parents and other artists.
- You get someone to try something new.
- You can challenge the young people involved and successfully encourage them to overcome those challenges.
- Artists and youth workers gain a stronger understanding of the young person's perspective.
- The work created feels very relevant to the group.
- The artists and youth workers are experiencing a constant learning curve and learning to work where the young people are in their development.
- A good support network has been created for everyone involved in the project.



## Was it a success?

Even before you get into the realm of formal evaluation, chances are you are inherently asking yourself at the end of every session: Did that go well? How could we improve this?

The reason to use formal evaluation tools and approaches is to make this internal reflection process more visible, to create far more detail and to communicate your work to as broad an audience as possible (especially if they don't know anything about your area of work!).

## 5 reasons it's important for you to evaluate a project

- 1. So you know whether or not it's actually working**  
You want to know whether the project is delivering in the way that you want it to. But you can't know how well it's working without evaluating. Like it or not, we are all subject to bias. A strong evaluation helps us to get the big picture and combine different perspectives to understand the impact of a project.
- 2. So you can be adaptable**  
As your project progresses you want to make sure that it responds to the needs of the young people that you are working with. Creating a real time evaluation structure within your project will help you to create a timely response to those needs and to adapt to any changes that might take place within the context that you're working in.
- 3. So you're aware of any unintended outcomes**  
With every project there are usually more outcomes than we anticipated and it's really important to get a clear picture about what these are. Positive unintended outcomes mean more is happening than you thought, negative unintended outcomes means something needs changing. You won't capture these without an evaluation plan.
- 4. So that you can communicate the value of your work**  
It's vital to be able to communicate the value of your work in a way that people understand, for many reasons – securing funding, advocacy and collaboration to name a few. To communicate you need to present your information in a format that people can understand; in many cases this means telling the story of your programme as accurately as possible and providing the facts and figures to back up what you're saying. You won't get this information reliably without an evaluation strategy.
- 5. To help look after the young people that you're working with**  
Unless you capture the young people's experiences, there is a possibility that issues that arise during a project may be overlooked or even forgotten. Staff and volunteers need to know what they have done well and likewise if something isn't working it needs to be identified to help move the programme forward.



## Evaluation Tools

For more information about ways to evaluate, check out these links!

**Evaluation Toolkit for the Voluntary and Community Arts in Northern Ireland:**

[http://www.proveandimprove.org/documents/VoluntaryCommunityArtsEvalToolkit\\_000.pdf](http://www.proveandimprove.org/documents/VoluntaryCommunityArtsEvalToolkit_000.pdf)

**Youth Arts Programme Evaluation Toolkit: description of outcomes**

<http://www.youtharts.ie/sites/youtharts.ie/files/NYCIDescribingTheOutcomes.pdf>

# 10 RESOURCES

## The National Youth Arts Programme

The National Youth Council of Ireland's Youth Arts Programme is a partnership approach to promoting and developing youth arts in Ireland. It is a strategic partnership of the National Youth Council, the Arts Council and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

It is dedicated to the development and advancement of youth arts in out-of-school contexts in Ireland, particularly in the youth and voluntary sectors. It aims specifically to realise the creative potential of young people through good quality arts practice and to develop appropriate policies at local, regional and national level.

### This is achieved through:

- Encouraging and supporting young people in accessing and participating in the arts;
- Promoting exemplary models of good practice in youth organisations and in the wider youth sector;
- Promoting youth arts as a valid youth work methodology that is informed by relevant art form expertise and experience;
- Acting as a national information and resource service in the youth arts area;
- Promoting a partnership approach to work in the area of youth arts;
- Creating linkages with appropriate agencies at local, national and international level.

[www.youtharts.ie](http://www.youtharts.ie)

## Your Local Arts Office

Every county council in Ireland has an arts office or arts service and their job is to support the creation and development of the arts in their county. Arts offices can offer a range of supports to youth projects or groups interested in developing a youth arts residency most notably:

- Advice
- Identifying appropriate local artists
- Grants
- Information about local venues/events/arts organisations

## Local Arts Organisations

When embarking on a residency, it may also be worthwhile touching base with other local arts organisations. They may have additional resources such as the use of equipment, venues or personnel, which could provide additional support to your project.



## Some examples of funding

### 1. The Arts Council

#### **Young People, Children and Education Bursary Award**

This award supports individual professional artists working with, and producing work for, children and young people across a range of artforms. The purpose of the award is to support professional artists to develop their art practice.

#### **Young People, Children and Education Programme Activity Fund**

The purpose of this fund is to assist experienced organisations to provide high-quality artistic programmes for, by or with children and young people that are in line with Arts Council policy and strategic priorities for young people, children and education (YPCE).

#### **Young Ensembles Scheme**

The primary purpose of this award is to support groups of young people between the ages of 12 and 23 to create ambitious and original work together in any art form (e.g. architecture circus, dance, digital media, film, music, theatre, literature, visual arts, or any combination of the above)

### 2. National Youth Arts Programme Artist and Youth Work Residency Scheme

The Artist and Youth Work Residency Scheme is a grant scheme for youth arts projects funded by The Arts Council and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and managed by the Arts Programme of The National Youth Council of Ireland.

The Scheme is designed to promote innovative partnerships between youth groups, artists and (where relevant) arts organisations. A residency may take the form of an artist in residence in a youth work setting and/or a youth group in residence in an arts setting.

Young people will have the opportunity to work with and learn from practitioners of excellence in their field. Equally, artists will have the opportunity to enrich their own professional practice through the contextual experience of working with young people.

<http://www.youtharts.ie/content/artist-youth-work-scheme>

### 3. The Ireland Funds Small Grants Scheme

The objective of the grant round is to contribute needed funds to a wide range of organisations working across the 32 counties of Ireland.

<https://www.theirelandfunds.org/grant-round>



## More NYCI Youth Arts programmes you could get involved in:

### NUI Certificate in Youth Arts

is a part time programme of study in Irish Youth Arts Practice, with 6 modules covered over 12 contact days between October and June. The programme is a partnership initiative of Maynooth University and the National Youth Council of Ireland Arts Programme and leads to an award of the National University of Ireland, placed at Level 7 on the National Qualifications Framework.

**The Certificate in Youth Arts aims to introduce those working in the non formal education sector to the concepts, principles and practice of youth arts using a context and practice approach.**

### Youth Arts Summer School

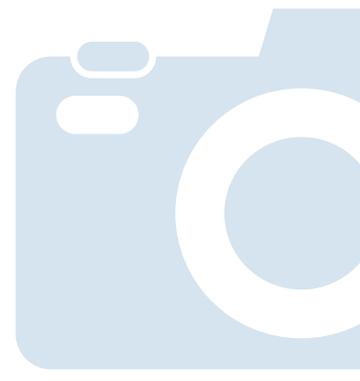
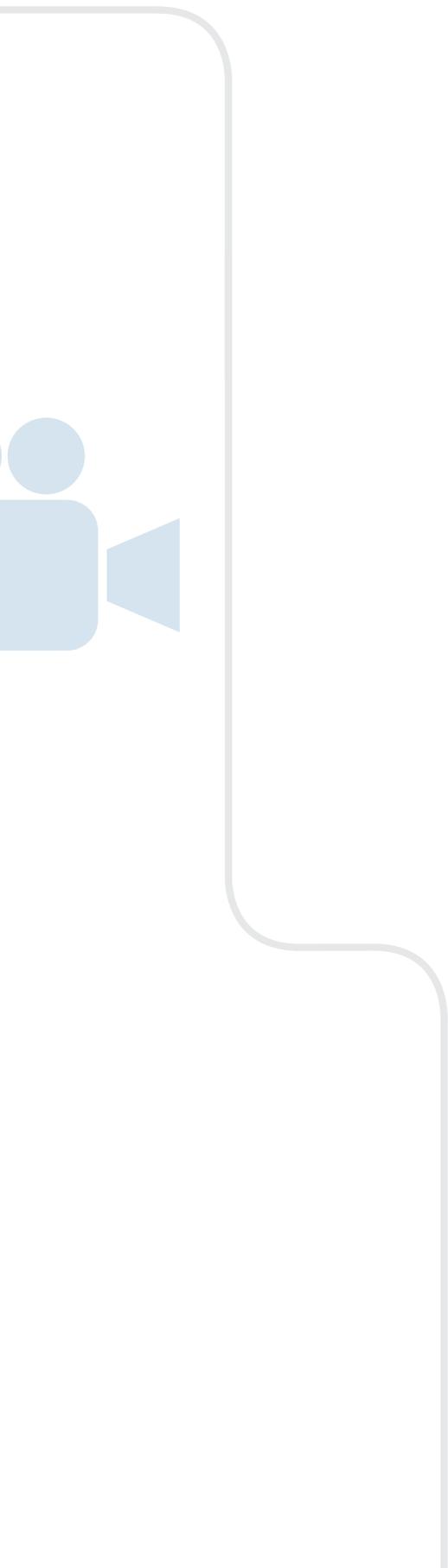
Delivered by NYCI's Youth Arts Programme, Summer School is a three day residential youth arts practice training which takes place in June each year. The three day in depth workshop experience will give you the inspiration, practical know how and skills to work in new ways with your young people and offer them a high quality arts experience. Previous Summer Schools have offered training in drama, film, street theatre, drumming and song writing.

### Training

The Youth Arts Programme delivers one day trainings on a range of topics to provide opportunities for skills development and networking for youth workers. We can also develop bespoke training on specific arts topics you may be interested in.

Check our website for other initiatives such as seminars, arts resources and one day trainings, these will change from year to year. [www.youtharts.ie](http://www.youtharts.ie)







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