



Irish  
Writers  
Centre

Áras  
Scribhneoirí  
na hÉireann

**A HOME  
FOR WRITERS  
IN IRELAND**

**Irish Writers Centre**  
Strategy 2022-2026





# Foreword

As the Irish Writers Centre enters its fourth decade, it's heartening to see the Irish literature landscape truly flourishing. In the past few years, we have warmly welcomed new entrants to the scene, observed new and increased publishing opportunities, professional development and formal education prospects as well as welcomed the growth of peer organisations and literary festivals. All have sustained a focused spotlight on writing from Ireland and created a real sense of optimism and opportunity for those already writing or interested in writing.

It's therefore timely that the Irish Writers Centre is unveiling a new five-year strategy that maps our vision for an energised and supportive ecosystem that will create a vibrant and diverse community of writers. Devising this strategy provided us with a valuable opportunity to develop a clear understanding of our strengths and achievements,

the unique contribution we make to the Irish cultural landscape and the compelling range of opportunities open to us as we look to the future.

As a national organisation with an all-island reach, this 2022 - 2026 strategy proudly reaffirms our role and relevance to the individual writer, and our commitment to working with the writer over the course of their entire career. Importantly, it clearly maps out our overall ambition of providing ongoing opportunities for writers to develop themselves, and join an engaged community of like-minded people with whom they can share their skills, passion and purpose.

This is a unique chapter for the Irish Writers Centre where, propelled by innovation and optimism, we commit to being ambitious for writers, for ourselves and for what we can achieve together. We welcome you to join us as we embark on this very exciting next phase of our evolution.

**Breda Brown**  
Chairperson

# OUR GOALS

- 1 Support professional writers to advance their craft and career with confidence and resilience
- 2 Enhance opportunities for people across all communities to explore and participate in creative writing
- 3 Cultivate an engaged community of writers and the strategic alliances that support our ambitions
- 4 Secure the places and spaces that best enable our work across the island of Ireland
- 5 Ensure our future as an organisation with the knowledge, imagination and resources to thrive sustainably



## Introduction

The Irish Writers Centre has grown from strength to strength since its last strategy, empowered by a strong sense of purpose towards writers, continually propelling us to be as relevant and encouraging to them as we can be.

True to its founding vision in 1991, the IWC is the go-to home for writers to develop their craft and meet other writers. Thirty-one years later, we continue to cherish the beginner and emerging writer, while also recognising that a writer's career is not secured by publication alone. As the IWC becomes increasingly developmental in the supports it offers, our new strategy embraces the role that we wish to play in uplifting authors in the challenging art of maintaining their professional careers.

This new 2022-2026 strategy demonstrates our commitment to writers as defined through the provision of collaborative programmes, residencies, bursaries, mentoring, information and

training supports which sustain writers throughout their career arc, from beginners to professionals. However, a writers' community which is bonded and nurturing is the strongest asset we can have as a sector, and through this strategy, we embrace an ethos of diversity and a practice of collegiality, tapping into the great experience and generosity which exists in the literary community to make new connections and share knowledge. We will grow a web of interconnected networks, a meitheal across the island, to offer writers access and opportunities to connect as peers, and together, envisage ways through partnerships to fruitfully connect their work to their audiences.

We acknowledge the invaluable role of our main funders the Arts Council of Ireland and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and also Fáilte Ireland as our long-time partner-landlord. I would also like to applaud our vibrant board and incredibly dedicated team who are always poised with a welcome for writers of every hue.

**Valerie Bistany**  
Director/CEO



**For over 30 years the IWC has acknowledged and uplifted those with the courage and compulsion to write by providing opportunities for them to develop their skill, advance their ambitions and join a vibrant and diverse community of people who share their passion and purpose. We do so because we believe in the power of writing to create understanding and bring enjoyment to our world today and to imagine what it might become.**

## Purpose

The Irish Writers Centre exists to encourage and elevate writers to achieve their dreams and ambitions as part of a vital, bonded community.

## Vision

Our vision for the future is inspired by the tradition of seanchaí or storyteller, the highly valued custodian of the stories, knowledge and culture that defined and united a community.

We want to live in a world where writers prosper, esteemed for the words and ideas that illuminate our lives and further our understanding.

## Mission

We support a vibrant and diverse community of writers of all types and talents to develop their craft, capacity and confidence to thrive as a writer in the world.

### We do this by:

- > Supporting writers at every stage in their career arc from aspiring to professional.
- > Curating a suite of professional development activities for writers including workshops, masterclasses, seminars, events and skills-sharing opportunities.
- > Providing information, advice, resources and access to opportunities.
- > Providing courses which are carefully designed to suit all those who write.
- > Creating spaces, online and physical, where writers can meet, share ideas and information and create their own networks of belonging and professional support.
- > Creating collaborative programmes and events which bring writers together in the development of their work, the formation of their careers and connection with their audiences.

## Ambition

The new strategy coincides with our fourth decade as the home of writers in Ireland. In this new decade, we determine to be future-focused, propelled by ambition, innovation and optimism for writers and writing in Ireland.

Over the next five years we will affirm our role as the go-to support and development organisation for writers of all types and talents across the island of Ireland and amplify the openness, expertise and inclusivity that makes our work and approach distinctive.

We will continue to support and strengthen the existing professional literary infrastructure, rising to meet its challenges. We will continue to work in partnership with others, knowing that we can increase our impact for writers, the literary community and society by working together.

We will extend our work with the professional writing community, deepening our engagement with them as we seek to advance their creative and career potential. We will continue to break down real and perceived

barriers to writing and to engagement with us, increasing accessibility and ensuring equality of opportunity.

We will cultivate a community of writers, a meitheal of resourceful, resilient individuals, supporting each other personally and professionally. We will encourage and enable that community to multiply and diversify, to create its own networks and connections of interest and support. We will maximise the opportunities afforded us by the physical and virtual spaces we inhabit as we seek to extend our reach across the island. We will do so responsibly, seeking to minimise our environmental impact.

We will have the resources, skills, energy and imagination to deliver on our ambition. By this enterprise, with sure capacity and a positive culture, with the backing of an empowered community, we will extend our influence and impact, and ensure that anyone who writes or who wishes to do so, whatever their age or stage, background or lived experience, knows and enjoys the embrace of the Irish Writers Centre.

## Values

### Affinity

We are a community of individuals connected by our love of writing. We are allies who enjoy sharing skills, experiences, and all that we have in common, supporting and learning from each other.

### Openness

There is a warm welcome for everyone who writes or who wishes to write at the Irish Writers Centre. We are interested in new ideas, excited by possibilities and always ready to change for the better. We're here, ready to share our expertise and insight, and to listen, to learn and to respond appropriately.

### Relevance

What matters most to writers matters most to us. We stay closely connected to what's important to writers and to their creative lives now and in the future.

### Progression

We are ambitious for writers, for ourselves and for what we can achieve together. We look ahead with optimism and to move forward with ingenuity, energy and dexterity.

## Ethos

The Irish Writers Centre is committed to the principles and practices of equality, diversity and inclusion. We are also committed to advancing the thinking and practices that support a sustainable environment.

This ethos permeates everything that we do under each of our goals.

# GOAL 1

Support professional writers to advance their craft and career with confidence and resilience

## Why this goal?

The pandemic revealed the essentiality of art and artists to our affective and intellectual lives. By contrast, the Words Ireland survey (2021) exposed how challenging it is to be a writer today. These two realities inform and impel the prioritisation of work to support professional writers.

We are in a position of leadership from which we may shape thinking and generate actions to improve the well-being of professional writers and to advance their working conditions. As such, true to our purpose, we will uplift and upskill writers, supporting their ambitions for their craft as well as their right to earn a sustainable living from their writing.

## OBJECTIVES

## OUTCOMES

1

Curate a suite of creative and professional development activities for writers.

Our support has elevated the craft and well-being of professional writers.

2

Create learning opportunities and professional pathways for professional writers that strengthen their capacity to have a sustainable career as a writer.

Professional writers are better equipped, with enhanced confidence and capabilities, to sustain a career as a writer.

3

Be a generous, expert source of information, advice and exchange for professional writers.

Professional writers seek out and trust our knowledge and counsel.

4

Continue to provide employment opportunities for professional writers that evidence best practice in terms of pay and conditions.

Professional writers are employed and remunerated in a way that respects their talent, acknowledges writing as a profession and advances its viability as a career.

5

Add our voice to advocacy efforts on behalf of professional writers and the literary sector.

We have contributed to raising the status of professional writers and to advancing their living and working conditions.



# GOAL 2

Enhance opportunities for people across all communities to explore and participate in creative writing

## Why this goal?

The founding aim of the Irish Writers Centre was to provide open access to writing, creating opportunities for those whose voices were traditionally overlooked to find the confidence to express themselves and tell their stories.

As Ireland changes, embracing new people and ways of being in the world, we will continue our commitment to encouraging writers of all types and talents, and especially those whose voice may be less heard, to explore and participate in creative writing. To that end, we look forward to breaking down real and perceived barriers to writing and to engagement with us, to increasing accessibility and to ensuring equality of opportunity.

	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
1	Maintain and develop our portfolio of creative writing courses, ensuring they continue to be wide-ranging, inclusive and innovative and to offer high-quality participant experiences that match lifestyles and needs.	Our courses continue to be highly regarded, widely appealing and well-attended, tailored to suit needs and responsive to new opportunities.
2	Continue to create stimulus opportunities that encourage and enable people from under-represented groups to explore writing.	More people from under-represented groups enjoy participation in our programmes.
3	Act as a friendly, authoritative source of information on writers and writing for the public.	We are the go-to organisation for all those interested in writers or writing.



# GOAL 3

Cultivate an engaged community of writers and the strategic alliances that support our ambitions

## Why this goal?

Our name is testament to our intent: to be at the heart of a vibrant and diverse community of writers across the island of Ireland. We recognise that writers work alone. We also know that writers want to be part of a community and to enjoy the sense of identification, the support and acceptance that such belonging brings. We will continue to nurture the community of writers we serve and to empower them to create their own networks and locales of support and learning.

In turn, we will continue to maintain and develop the organisational partnerships and alliances that advance and extend our work. With a proven track record of collaborative practice, we will continue to use this approach to bring together the stakeholders that matter most to writers to consider and effect positive change.

	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
1	Develop the scaffolds and networks which enable writers to connect with each other and forge a supportive, learning community of peers.	We have enabled the establishment of autonomous networks that are actively supporting writers in their communities.
2	Diversify and adapt our collaborative processes bringing together key stakeholders to broker new opportunities for writers.	We have engendered new understanding, connections and supports that benefit writers.
3	Review and strengthen our proposition to members to increase engagement and affiliation.	We have an active, engaged membership cohort with a strong sense of belonging and loyalty to the IWC community.
4	Sustain and extend the strategic partnerships and alliances that support our ambitions and ensure our impact.	We have strong, secure relationships with the stakeholders critical to the realisation of our priorities.

# GOAL 4

Secure the places and spaces that best enable our work across the island of Ireland

## Why this goal?

Now entering our fourth decade as the go-to support and development organisation for writers, we want to affirm our place and our reach as an all-island entity. We will do so by maximising the potential afforded us by the physical and virtual spaces we inhabit and by proactively creating opportunities for a temporary or durational presence in sites and situations across the island. In this endeavour we will be mindful of our environmental impact and seek to use or develop spaces which are climate positive.

	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
1	Develop a fit-for-purpose home for the Irish Writers Centre.	We have security of tenure in a building that meets our evolving needs.
2	Continue to develop the digital potential of our work, and specifically diversify the delivery models of our courses, to increase access and expand our reach.	Investment in our digital platforms has transformed participation in our programmes.
3	Continue to engender work in contexts and locations outside of Dublin.	We have extended our presence in creative spaces across the island of Ireland.



# GOAL 5

Ensure our future as an organisation with the knowledge, imagination and resources to thrive sustainably

## Why this goal?

We want to be the best that we can be as an organisation so that we can support writers to be at their best in a thriving literary ecology. In that endeavour, we will continue to ensure our financial resilience, effect exemplary management and governance practices and activate policies in ways that make a meaningful difference. We will amplify our voice to tell our own story with pride and purpose and to champion writers.

We know that how we do our work is as important as what we do. By bringing our values to life, we will ensure that the Irish Writers Centre is a great place to work and a highly-regarded organisation.

	OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
1	Build the capacity and confidence of the team and the organisational culture to deliver on the ambitions of this strategy.	We have a highly-skilled, motivated and effective team who feel supported and happy in their work.
2	Continue to diversify the profile and competencies of the board to ensure potent leadership.	We are a stronger, more effective and inclusive organisation because of our committed and experienced board.
3	Increase and diversify our funding and income streams.	We have a broader funding base and have increased our financial resilience.
4	Invigorate our brand and increase the visibility and impact of our communications.	We are recognised and valued as the leading support and development organisation for writers of all types and talents across the island of Ireland.
5	Pursue the development and implementation of necessary and progressive policies and practices.	Ethical, sustainable governance practices are alive and at work in the IWC.





# Testimonials

*Here, in 19 Parnell Square, a genuine community has grown and flourished. It, like all truly functioning communities, has had to craft its own ethic of solidarity, one that is based on equality, full participation, and genuine respect for the many differing voices that makes up its whole. It is thus more accurately described as a vortex rather than a haven.*

*It is for that reason that I am very proud to be Patron of the Irish Writers Centre.*

**President of Ireland,  
Michael D. Higgins,**  
Patron of the Irish Writers Centre

*The Irish Writers Centre is the vibrant heart of the writing community in Ireland. As an amenity and as a service, it is excellent.*

**IWC Have Your Say  
survey participant**

*At every stage the Writers Centre has assisted my evolution as a writer, provided me with access, encouragement and community and embraced my attempts to live a creative life.*

**Olivia Fitzsimons**

*Encountering the IWC has changed my life: I dared writing in a foreign language...I was selected for bursaries and different projects that have helped me become a more skilled and successful writer.*

**Rafael Mendes**

*Writerly ambition works in generations and works in groups and tribes, so if you're looking for your tribe a place like the Writers Centre is a good place to start.*

**Anne Enright,**  
IWC Ambassador



## THANK YOU

A heartfelt thank you to all of our writer friends, colleagues, funders and stakeholders who took part in the strategy development and survey, ably led by Janice McAdam. Thank you to the IWC team who were essential at all stages of the process, the IWC Board who participated and oversaw it, and especially the Strategy Working Group (Breda Brown, Dermot Davis, Susanne Dirks, Emma Gorman, and Jess Majekodunmi) whose wise counsel and insights shaped the strategy into its final form.



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