



Strategic Plan 2026-2030

A Permanent Home for Modern Ballet in Ireland



About Ballet Ireland

Reimagining ballet for today

We reimagine ballet for a modern Irish audience, balancing deep respect for the art form with a passion for continuous renewal in how we commission, perform and engage.

Ballet Ireland presents both high-quality productions of well-known and loved full-length classics including reimagined versions, alongside newly commissioned bold contemporary works which inspire and resonate with audiences of today.

The boldness of Ballet Ireland's programming has attracted a company of highly trained and skilled international dancers, who are recognised by audiences, critics and peers alike for the calibre of their performance, their individual style, and razor-sharp technique.

Ballet Ireland is proud to operate within the Arts Council's Strategic Funding framework. This reflects an ongoing partnership and recognition of the organisation's national significance.

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Introduction

Building for the Future

This plan defines Ballet Ireland's strategic focus areas for the period 2026–2030, building on successes from the previous strategy '*Creating Space For Success 2022-2025*'.

'A Permanent Home for Modern Ballet in Ireland' provides a framework to secure the future for Ballet Ireland as it consolidates significant achievements made post-pandemic, approaches its 30th Anniversary year, and works toward a permanent home as the cornerstone of a long-term sustainable future for the company.

The strategy takes current resources available into consideration, is risk aware, actionable, and measurable to support the company's development, growth and impact. Over the next five years, the company will prioritise work around four strategic focus areas: *Bold programming; Understanding audiences and supporters; Strategic partnerships; and Sustainable operating model.*

The 30th anniversary provides the perfect opportunity to launch a targeted campaign to support the move to a new permanent home. A feasibility study will be needed depending on the final approach which will need to consider both the funds needed to realise the move, and the resulting opportunities and challenges offered by the new permanent home which will inform a longer-term sustainable operating model.

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Ballet Ireland's Position

Strengths and Challenges Ahead

The company has emerged from the pandemic in a comparatively strong position, achieving meaningful success with audiences and earning praise from sector peers for its bold programming and commissioning of new choreography. Its reputation has grown both nationally and internationally, with increased interest from international programmers and the rare achievement of securing multi-year philanthropic support through corporate sponsorship.

The company's vision, mission and values, and resilient organisational culture have enabled a small but dedicated team to deliver significant artistic and financial returns on public investment, positioning Ballet Ireland as a leading force in Irish dance.

However, these achievements are tempered by ongoing challenges. Despite its status as a Strategically Funded Organisation by the Arts Council, annually confirmed funding cycles limit long-term planning, while the absence of a permanent base constrains visibility, brand awareness, the ability to diversify income generation, and the aspiration to become part of Ireland's cultural fabric. Perceptions of ballet as elitist and the lack of dedicated outreach resources further restrict the company's ability to broaden engagement.

The central challenge remains how to build on these notable successes and expand impact while operating within the constraints of funding.

In order to continue to build on significant successes, the company will continue to invest in bold programming, transform its understanding of audiences and supporters, strengthen and expand strategic partnerships, and diversify income sources in order to develop a long-term sustainable business model.

Securing a permanent home is a pivotal step for both the company and the future of ballet in Ireland. This plan sets out the strategic priorities that must now be advanced to realise and sustain that ambition.

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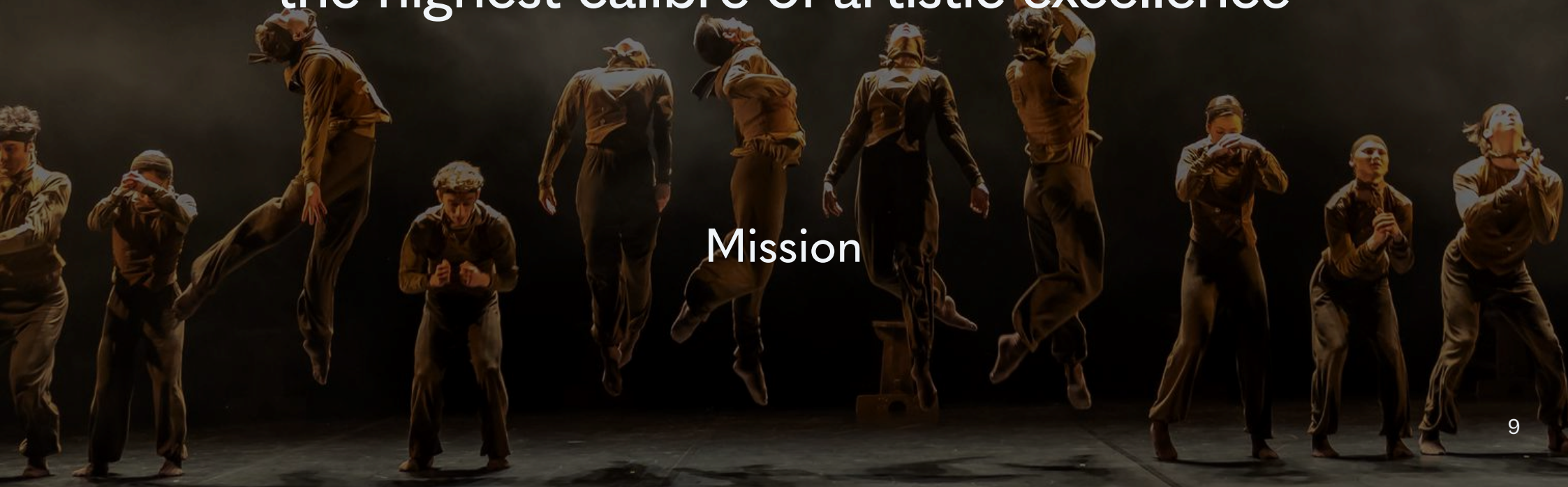
To continue to shatter preconceptions and inspire everyone in Ireland to experience the physical and emotional power of modern ballet

Vision

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To enrich our community by sharing the power and joy of dance, inspiring and connecting with, and growing audiences for the highest calibre of artistic excellence

Mission





Core Values

We are led by our Values. They guide what we do and how we do it.

Excellence

We strive for excellence in everything we do. We achieve greatness, lead boldly and bravely with passion and artistic creativity

Professionalism

We operate with integrity, financial responsibility, are open ethical and transparent in all our dealings and operate to the highest level of good governance and professionalism

Creativity

Bold uniqueness and originality are central to our collaborative approach to creative thinking

Respect & Dignity

We work together as a team, embracing equality, diversity, and inclusion, and treating one another with dignity and respect both on and off the stage

Accessibility

We strive to make ballet accessible to all. We continue to challenge stereotypes and outdated perceptions, transform attitudes, and welcome audiences new and old

Strategic Focus Areas

Exploring Our Future Success

This plan outlines four key Strategic Focus Areas which respond to and build on recent successes, challenges from the external environment, and put in place approaches which will both prepare the company for a permanent home and allow it to develop a sustainable operating model to ensure the longer-term survival and development of the company once settled in a permanent home. Some of these are more closely related to previous strategic priorities, and more recent successes, and others are strategic responses to current challenges, and the changing external environment.

01. Bold Programming

Fostering connections through bold programming has enhanced audience experiences, encouraging greater participation and a deeper appreciation for ballet

02. Understanding Audiences and Supporters

Identifying their needs, motivations, and preferred ways of engaging, enabling us to tailor communications and initiatives that strengthen relationships and increase long-term support

03. Strategic Partnerships

Fostering strong connections with key stakeholders enhances Ballet Ireland's visibility and supports its mission and strategic objectives

04. Sustainable Operating Model

Establishing a sustainable operating model is essential for Ballet Ireland to thrive, ensuring consistent funding, diversified income sources, and strategic partnerships to support our long-term vision for modern ballet



01. Bold Programming

Differentiation Through High-Quality Work

New choreography commissioned and programmed through Bold Moves has differentiated the company's work and positioned it well, bringing high-quality creations and international programming to Irish audiences. The quality of programming and performances has been praised by international sector peers as well as Irish dance sector specialists for building an audience for more modern work.

This has been key to the company's survival post-pandemic, is acknowledged to have achieved meaningful success with audiences and built the company's reputation both nationally and internationally. This approach to programming attracts highly trained and skilled international dancers, who are recognised by audiences, critics and peers alike for the calibre of their performance, their individual style, and razor-sharp technique.

In order to continue to maintain the highest standards and connect with and inspire audiences, a continued focus on bold programming proven to deliver audience development is essential, alongside longer-term artistic planning to establish longer lead times for both institutional marketing and to facilitate building relationships with audiences, supporters and international programmers.

- **Bold Moves**

Commissioning new choreography to differentiate our artistic voice

- **Reimagined Classics**

Contemporary commissions alongside fresh takes on well-loved favourites

- **International Focus**

Global programming and longer-term planning to build reputation

02. Understanding Audiences

Deepening Engagement with Supporters and Potential Attendees

Benchmarked audience data clearly shows that the company has achieved success with audiences, and sector peers celebrate how the company has been able to develop and grow audiences with mostly sold-out touring performances in Ireland.

Brand visibility and awareness are understood to be limited, and ballet may still be perceived as elitist by some potential audience members or supporters. The language used to describe the company, and its work, needs careful evaluation and feedback on this will be examined alongside the testing of different marketing and communications approaches.

The need to clearly and strongly differentiate the company's offer, both for audiences, but also for potential supporters, particularly corporate sponsors, is clear. Increased competition for audiences both in terms of how consumers prioritise limited discretionary spend, and in terms of potential donors and corporate sponsors, requires a deeper understanding of both audiences and supporters in order to communicate with and engage them more effectively.

Audiences' perception of the work as 'accessible' is key and will be a priority in developing the brand and messaging. The company will embed a more structured methodical approach to gathering and analysing audience feedback, both to improve its understanding of audiences and potential supporters, and to more effectively evidence its impact.

Sponsorship and discretionary giving has shifted away from Arts and Culture and it is essential to develop strategies to more effectively identify and build relationships with supporters, creating a pathway to turn an engaged audience member into a supporter, particularly in anticipation of a targeted campaign to support the move to a permanent home.

- **Audience Insights**

Implementing structured feedback methods to gain valuable insights into audience preferences and improve engagement strategies

- **Brand Perception**

Enhancing messaging to help differentiate Ballet Ireland as accessible and inviting, challenging elitist perceptions of ballet

- **Supporter Engagement**

Developing relationships with potential sponsors and donors and creating a pathway for ongoing support to broaden our funding sources

03. Strategic Partnerships

Building Collaborations for Future Growth and Success

The company delivers well against its vision and mission and generates a significantly large return on public investment. This means it is well placed to continue to deliver against Arts Council priorities and is also ideally placed to engage and inspire regional and national audiences with potential additional support from the Touring of Work - Advance Planning Scheme. This key strategic partnership with the company's principal funder is essential to the continued success and potential growth of the company, whilst it develops further strategic relationships and diversifies income generation.

Securing significant philanthropic support through multi-year corporate sponsorship has positioned the company well by successfully leveraging private investment to support artistic ambition. This key existing strategic partnership will be actively stewarded with a view to securing a long-term commitment and exploring in-kind support for the preparatory work needed to develop detailed plans for the move to a permanent home. A second corporate sponsor, either for regional and national touring, or for outreach activity, can provide a vital additional source of income and should be manageable alongside the existing corporate sponsor and other key strategic relationships.

The company runs very successful Summer Intensive programmes which sell out fast and generate valuable earned income, but the company lacks dedicated resource for outreach work and a lack of permanent space limits its impact and ability to expand and engage beyond the highly successful current programmes. Outreach work is attractive to corporate sponsors and other philanthropic supporters which presents opportunities to both secure further philanthropic support and generate further earned income.

A permanent home will provide increased opportunities to expand this aspect of the company's work, and generate further earned income, either through direct delivery or through new strategic partnerships with other providers.

- **Strengthened Relationships**

Fostering strong connections with key stakeholders enhances Ballet Ireland's visibility and supports its mission and strategic objectives

- **International Collaborations**

Engaging with global dance organisations boosts Ballet Ireland's profile and opens avenues for new opportunities and partnerships

- **Corporate Sponsorship**

Securing long-term corporate sponsors is essential for financial stability and expanding outreach programmes to engage broader audiences

04. Sustainable Operating Model

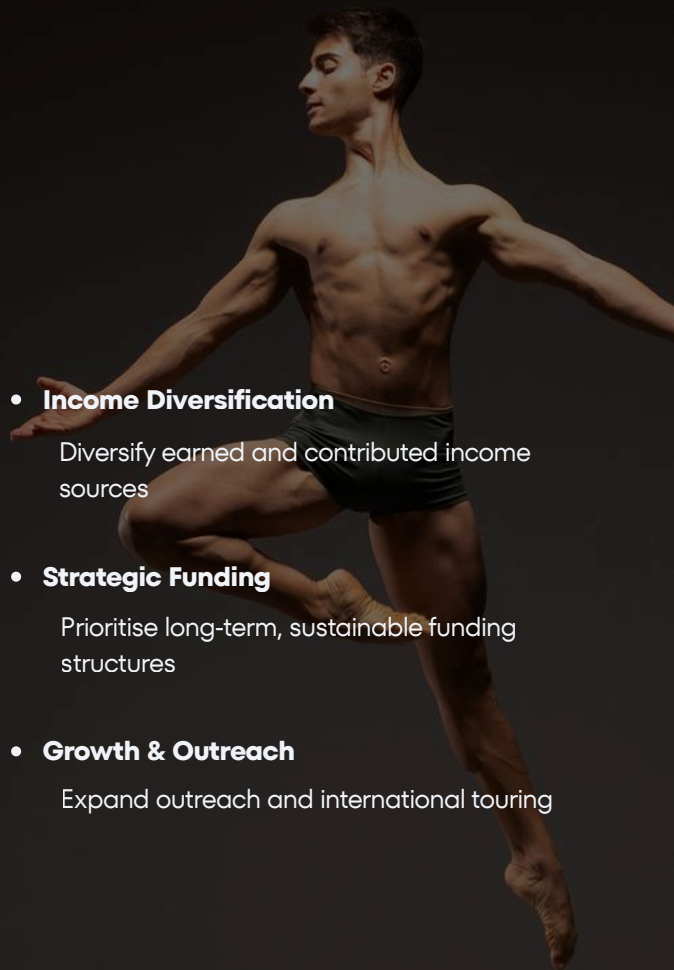
A Foundation for Growth

The company's reserves are robust due to sound financial management and diversification of sources of income. New approaches to income generation will need to continue to be prioritised in order to establish a long-term sustainable operating model for the company.

The general funding context is challenging for the broader Arts and Culture sector in Ireland despite funding provided by the Arts Council, and the philanthropic context, particularly with High-Net-Worth Individuals is especially challenging due to the lack of tax incentives.

In order to be able to do more and capitalise on successes, funding will need to be expanded with diversified sources of earned and contributed income, through additional strategic partnerships, expanded outreach activity, and a more structured approach to identifying and building relationships with potential supporters (donors and sponsors) embedded to support both the acquisition of, move to, and longer-term sustainability of a permanent home.

A better understanding of audiences and supporters will enable more structured approaches to identifying and building relationships with potential supporters, allowing the company to build a pathway to regular giving, alongside a more focused approach to expanded strategic partnerships to enable the company to increase income generating activity including international touring and outreach work.



- **Income Diversification**

Diversify earned and contributed income sources

- **Strategic Funding**

Prioritise long-term, sustainable funding structures

- **Growth & Outreach**

Expand outreach and international touring

Strategic Ambition

Securing A Permanent Home For Modern Ballet

Securing a physical space is the cornerstone of our future sustainability, transforming how we operate, create, and engage.

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LAUNCH PLATFORM

30th Anniversary

Leveraging this milestone to launch a targeted campaign for support



STRATEGY

Feasibility Study

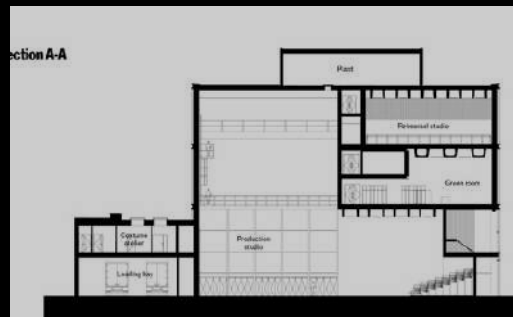
Defining precise spatial needs, financial costs, and logistical requirements



ENGAGEMENT

Developer Conversations

Active ongoing dialogue with developers to identify potential sites



Why It Matters

- **Visibility**

Anchors our brand in the cultural landscape

- **Outreach**

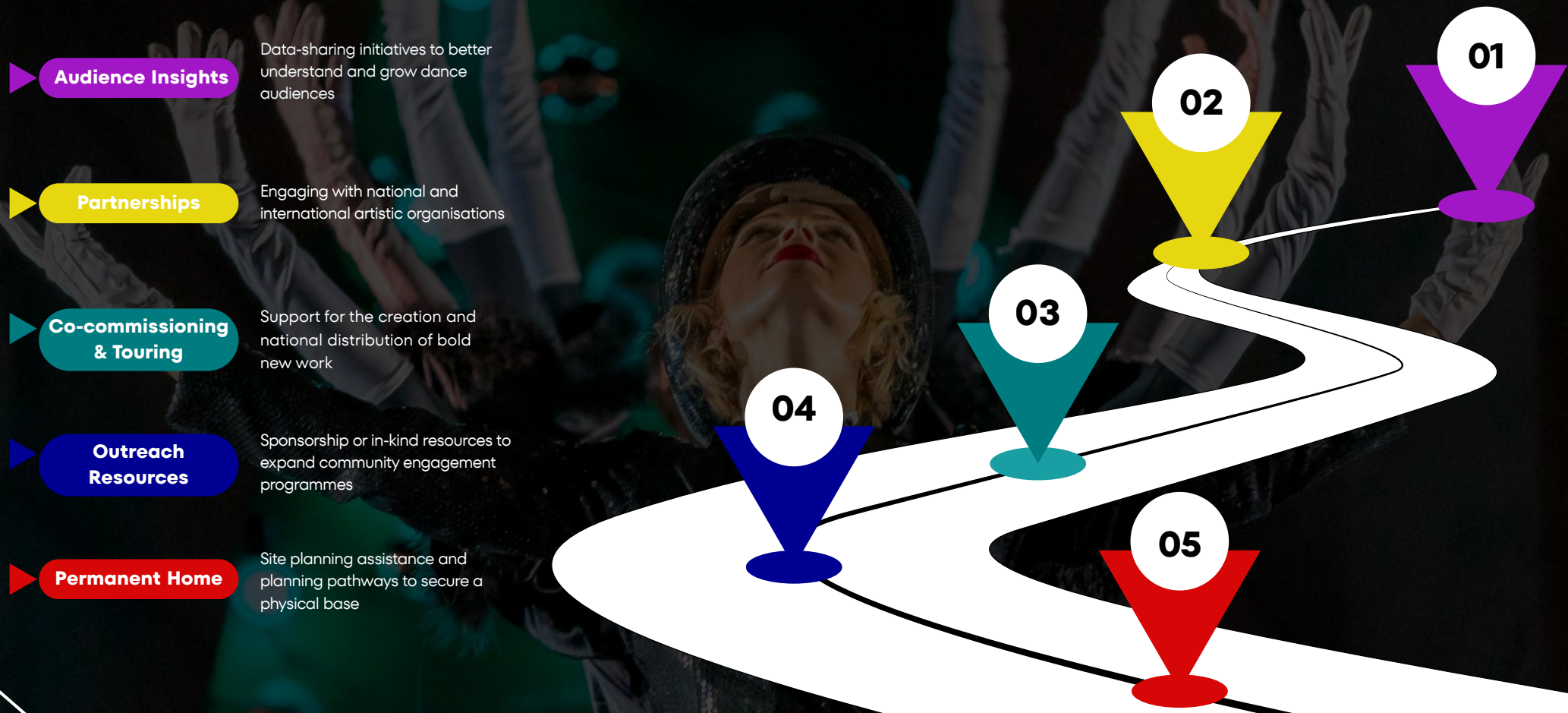
Dedicated space for education & community work

- **Sustainability**

Generates consistent earned income

How Public Partners Can Engage

Working together to maximize impact, reach and long-term sustainability



Strategy Development & Review

An external consultant was engaged in January 2025 to work with the company over a 10-month period. The external consultant attended Board meetings as an observer, reviewed and fed back on governance processes and documentation currently in place, reviewed key documentation including previous strategies, funding agreements, annual reports and accounts, and interviewed key stakeholders, peers and sector experts. This was complimented with a number of workshops held with the Board and Executive teams on topics including: Vision, Mission, Values, successes and challenges; long-term artistic planning; institutional marketing; branding & communications; and financial planning and fundraising. The external consultant also attended the company's successful Annual Fundraising event and spoke to a number of current key supporters.

A strategic road map was created and shared with the Board summarising Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Focus Areas, detailing key milestones for each of the four Strategic Focus Areas: Bold Programming; Understanding Audiences and Supporters; Strategic Partnerships; and Sustainable Operating Model. This provides the Board with a high-level summary of all aspects of the strategy and enables them to follow and review progress across areas of the plan.

The Executive team were provided with a more detailed implementation plan which outlines all actions needed to progress towards key milestones across each of the four Strategic Focus Areas, along with a timeline, and clear identification of who is responsible for each action.

The external consultant is available for further review and input following any key developments in the course of the implementation of the strategy.



Acknowledgements

Key Stakeholders

The Ballet Ireland Board, Executive team, and the external consultant would like to thank all key stakeholders for their honest feedback and generous engagement in this strategic planning process. We are grateful for your continued support for and interest in our work and look forward to working together towards achieving our long-term goal of a permanent home for Ballet in Ireland.

Board Support

The Executive team, and the external consultant would like to thank the Board for its continued commitment to providing their skill and expertise in shaping the direction and development of the organisation, for making dedicated resource, space and time available for the work needed to develop this plan, and for their important contributions to the workshops which have helped shape a refreshed Vision and Mission for the company, and inform a revised approach to branding and communications.

Executive Team

The external consultant, and the Board, would like to thank the small but mighty Executive team for their passion, commitment, and hard work in ensuring excellence and professionalism are at the heart of everything that Ballet Ireland does. We recognise that their workload limits their capacity to deliver above and beyond their already demanding roles and greatly appreciate their willingness to continue to learn and drive the organisation forward.

External Consultants

The Board and Executive team would like to thank the external consultant, Intercultura, on this strategic planning process, and all other external consultants who have contributed to the development of Ballet Ireland over the years and have shared their experience and insight as part of this latest phase of development for the company.





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