BRANAR

Strategy

2026–2030



Implementation & Monitoring

We will develop detailed annual workplans to implement our strategy and monitor progress through formal, internal end of year reviews. We will conduct a mid-term review of this strategy in 2028. A matrix of performance indicators, aligning with the outcomes stated here, will also be developed to robustly measure our impact and achievements.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all those who generously gave their time and shared their best thinking to inform the development of this strategy.
The strategy was developed with the support of independent consultant Janice McAdam.
Branar is funded by the Arts Council, Culture Ireland, Ealaín na Gaeltachta, Foras na Gaeilge, Galway City Council, Galway County Council and supported by Acorn Life Group and Rethink Ireland.





arts council ealaíon | funding theatre

Production **Branar**
Consultant **Janice McAdam**
Design **Red&Grey**
Illustration **Robbyn Gray**
Print **Booxs**
Published **Nov. 2026**

BRANAR



Branar, - air,m., a fallow field; the loose surface of a grubbed field; Ag déanamh Branair, turning up the surface of land, fig. Doing great things, uprooting or upsetting things; fearann branair, fallow land; act of clearing the lea surface; fig. act of writing,etc.

Foreword

From the earliest days of Branar we have championed the provision of high-quality arts experiences for children, firm in the belief that every child 'has the right to rest, to play, to self-expression and to arts and culture' asmandated by the UNCRC. Over the coming years, we will continue to make real this right, through our own artistic practice, by supporting others in their artistic practice and by amplifying our voice in advocacy with like-minded colleagues.

Childhood is a fast and finite time. Every day the innocence, joy and freedom of childhood is being eroded by the pace and supposed advancements of the modern world. The arts provide a place of refuge, a safe space where the imagination and innate curiosity of children can be held and cultivated.

Children are human beings with complex inner lives and real emotions. They all have vast and varied lives with different lived experiences; they are not a homogenous group. The work we create and support respects this. We don't see children as adults in waiting or as audiences of the future. We don't see art for children or the artists making art for children as lesser. We don't believe that an arts experience should be didactic or utilitarian. We believe in the value of arts for arts' sake.

Children deserve to interact with high quality arts experiences as both audience members and active participants. They deserve to have regular and varied contact with a myriad of art forms so that they may choose freely for themselves and come to understand what they enjoy.

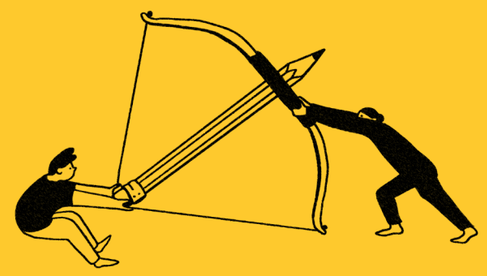
Branar Strategy
2026-2030

The years ahead are not without their uncertainties. We will meet opportunities and challenges the only way we know how: bravely, generously, playfully and true to who we are. We will make art that fires the imagination and bring it to children wherever they are. We will engage with children and the communities around them so that wonder is shared equally and equitably regardless of means or location. We will use our influence to strengthen the culture and conditions in which work for children can thrive, and to help to engender an understanding of the essentiality of that work.

To hold and enable these ambitions we will make sure Branar remains culturally sure and financially strong – a company whose artistic ambition is matched by its capacity and powered by the values that distinguish it.

Marc Mac Lochlainn
Artistic Director

BRANAR
branar.ie



Introduction

I am very pleased to introduce our new strategy for Branar 2026 – 2030. Used as a verb 'ag déanamh branair' holds meaning as the act of doing great things and of clearing the surface to reveal new land. In many respects, our previous strategy, the first for the company, cleared the way for us to do great things. It gave eloquent expression to our purpose, vision, mission and values and brought coherence and strategic intention to our work for children and in support of artists and the arts sector. In doing so, the strategy bolstered our confidence and our ambition.

Over the period 2022-2025 Branar has enjoyed unparalleled success. We have taken our place as equals on an international stage and played our part in changing the perception of art for children at home in Ireland.

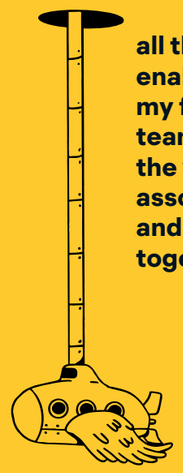
In the lifetime of the last strategy we produced 8 original shows for children, re-presented 3 favourite shows from our repertoire, toured nationally and internationally across 15 counties, 8 countries and 3 continents. We expanded the opportunities we created for teachers and children to engage with art through in-person and digitally enabled programmes. In total, we estimate that more than 51,000 children have enjoyed a quality arts experience through Branar. Our commitment to supporting artists and the theatre for young audiences' sector took formal shape in the substantive professional development programme, Branar Meitheal.

Our new strategy now carries Branar forward as we continue to cultivate wonder, true to our purpose of creating wonderful arts experiences for children so that they and their imaginations may thrive.

Branar Strategy
2026-2030

We embrace the work that lies ahead for us, buoyed by the maturity of our 25 years and invigorated by the Arts Council's recognition of Branar as a strategic, national organisation. To have our work, our culture and our contribution so acknowledged by the Arts Council is a huge achievement. Our new status holds privilege and responsibility. We welcome the opportunity this new funding and position offers, allowing us to consolidate a cohesive and cogent body of work with long-term, strategic intent; creating art, inviting discovery and championing art for children. The responsibilities that come with this new status have long been inherent in our beliefs and practices and we look forward to amplifying our role and influence in the coming years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who support our vision and ambition and enable our success. I would especially like to thank my fellow board members and the mighty Branar team, our funding partners and philanthropic donors, the venues and schools with whom we enjoy close associations and the children whose intelligence and creativity are our inspiration. May we continue together 'ag déanamh branair'.



Mark O'Donnell
Chairman

Who we are

Branar is one of Ireland's leading companies making wonder-filled arts experiences for children. Based in the West of Ireland, Branar is renowned for creating highly imaginative and beautiful work that exists within and beyond the Irish language.





Branar Strategy
2026-2030

Established in 2001 by Artistic Director Marc MacLochlainn, Branar has since created over 25 original productions. It works closely and collaboratively with an ensemble of exceptional artists and a cohort of creative partners. The company tours nationally and internationally, bringing its work with equal enthusiasm to leading arts venues such as the Sydney Opera House or to a small school in Galway. Branar is committed to reaching its audience, wherever they are.

Branar believes in sharing its expertise and resources with others. Since its inception, it has supported peer professionals and encouraged next generation practitioners. In 2021, Branar developed a formal creative production support programme, Branar Meitheal. Initially funded by the Arts Council as a two-year pilot initiative to build the capabilities of artists and producers in making and sharing work for young audiences, Branar Meitheal is now an integral part of the company's work.

Branar is a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital. It is governed by a voluntary board whose members are appointed for a term of three years, up to a maximum of nine years. The work of Branar is delivered by a small but mighty artistic and administrative team. Branar is currently seeking charitable status.

Board Members
Mark O'Donnell
David Brennan
Marie Farrell
Anne Marie Giblin
Bob Gray
Karen Sorensen

Branar Team
Marc Mac Lochlainn
Joanne Beirne
Niamh Ní Fhlatharta
Noel Minogue
Orla Henihan
Kate Crosbie
Anna Corcoran
Michael Foley

Policy Context

Branar operates in the context of several key strategies, plans and policies in relation to the arts, to children and to the Irish language.

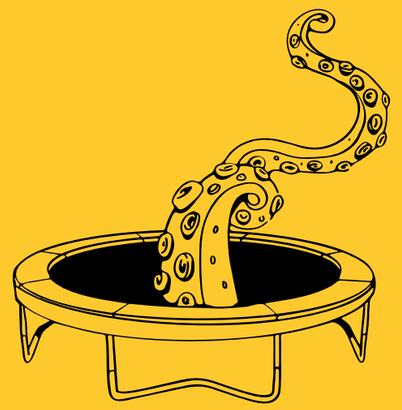
At a national level these include those of the Arts Council; Department of Culture, Communications and Sport; Creative Ireland; Department of Children, Disability and Equality; Department of Education and Youth; Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht; Foras na Gaeilge; Údarás na Gaeltachta and Ealaín na Gaeltachta.

Branar also attends to the plans of local government, in particular seeking to respond to the priorities of Galway City Council and Galway County Council as set out in their respective Arts Plans.

State Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

State Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Article 31. UN Convention on the Rights of The Child [1989]





Purpose

Why Branar exists and its unique contribution to others

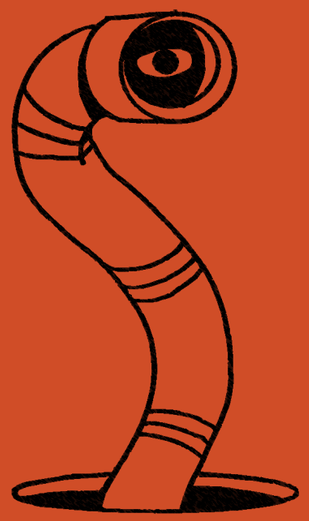
To create wonderful arts experiences for children so that they and their imaginations may thrive



Vision

The ideal Branar is working towards

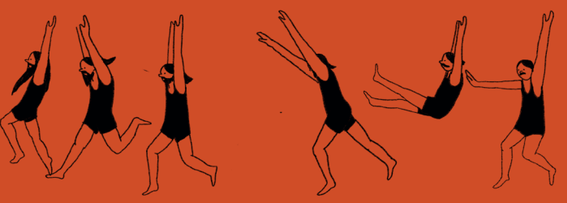
We look forward to a future in which the curiosity, compassion and creativity of every child in Ireland, as an equal citizen in the world, is nurtured through engagement with exceptional arts experiences



Mission

What Branar does to achieve its vision

To create excellent arts experiences for children and to champion the creation of more and better arts experiences for children



Values

What Branar stands for

Brave

Brave in our choices

Strong

Strong in championing quality arts for children

Generous

Generous in how we work

Playful

Playful in our approach

True

True to who we are

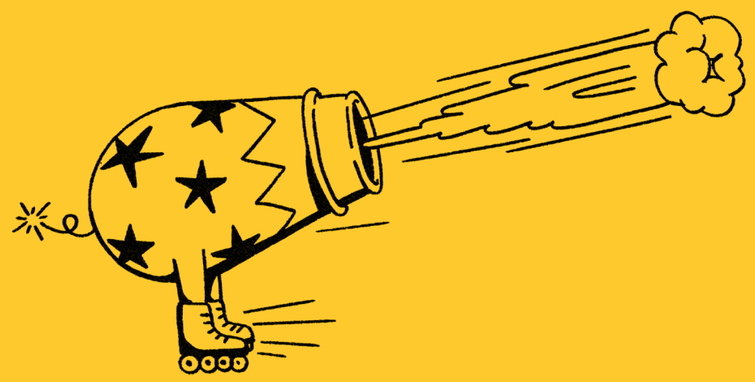
By 2030, we want high-quality arts experiences to be recognised as an essential part of every childhood and available to every child.

In working towards this ambition, we will have created extraordinary artistic experiences that have transformed how children encounter theatre, enjoy their imaginations and embrace their creativity. Through wonder filled productions and resonant engagement programmes, our work will have reached more children, in more places and in deeper, more meaningful ways.

By 2030, we will understand the impact of our work within school communities particularly and be set to innovate and amplify how generations of children and teachers understand and engage with the arts.

As a leader in theatre practice and in the arts for young audience, Branar will be integral to a national ecosystem, generously sharing expertise, advancing understanding, promoting new ideas and learning. Through Branar Meitheal, partnerships and advocacy we will be supporting and strengthening the culture and conditions that enable work for children to thrive.

By 2030, Branar too will be thriving as a trusted, well-known, well-run and well-resourced organisation with charitable status. Our artistic ambition will be matched by our organisational capacity and be powered by a culture that enables our ambitions and ensures our success.



We have identified four areas of strategic priority which serve our ambition for 2030. These priorities make real our purpose and work towards our vision.

Create
Wonder

Invite
Discovery



Champion
Art for Children

Secure
Our Future

Priority #1

Make and tour wonder-full, inventive, excellent art for children.

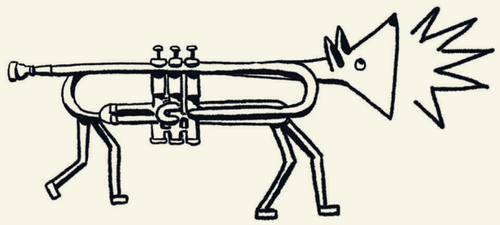
Why this Priority?

We believe every child should have the best childhood possible and that excellent art made especially for them should be an essential part of it.

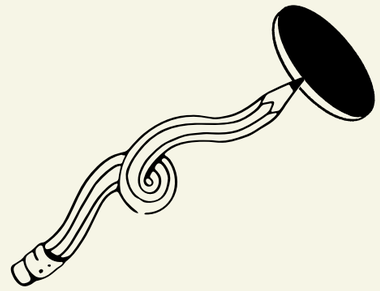
Children are at the heart of what we do. They are our audience and the experts whose opinion we seek to ensure that our work fires their imaginations and validates their experiences.

To honour children's imagination and intelligence, we want to weave new wonder into the artistic vision of Branar. We will make new work ourselves and invite other artists, including those who we have got to know through the Branar Meitheal programme, to make new work with Branar. At the same time, we will re-present favourite work from our repertoire at home and abroad.

We are proud of the trusted artistic partnerships that we have developed over the years. We look forward to continuing to these valued relationships, which enable and advance our shared goal of wonderful art for children.



Create
Wonder



Objectives	Outcomes
Create original, brave and playful productions with opportunities for children to inform our creative process.	At least two new shows, infused by children's insight and imagination.
Commission and present wonder-full new work from artists who share our vision and values.	New voices enhance our artistic vision and we have production pathways for Branar Meitheal and other artists.
With as minimal an environmental impact as possible, tour shows across Ireland and abroad, meeting children where they are.	One national tour and one international tour per year, undertaken in climate-responsible ways.
Maintain and develop relationships with individuals and organisations, nationally and internationally, within and beyond the arts sector.	A powerful network of creative associations and working partnerships are enabling and advancing our artistic ambitions.



Leaves, Photo : Ros Kavanagh



Priority #2

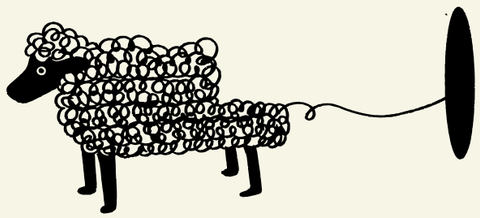
Create equitable access to quality arts experiences for children.

Why this Priority?

The UN Convention on the Rights of The Child may have been ratified by Ireland in 1992, but children's access to and participation in 'cultural and artistic life' remains deeply unequal especially for children disadvantaged by location or economic background. We want to make excellent arts experiences for children a reality as their right not as a privilege.

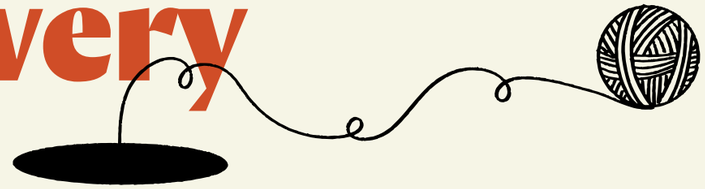
Building on the success of our work to date, we want to enrich our engagement activities, shaping opportunities and practices that will transform how generations of children and teachers understand and engage with the arts.

We want to deepen our work within school communities, creating opportunities for children to experience the arts and building the confidence and capabilities of teachers to support children's engagement with the arts. We also want to extend the reach of our work for children in the West of Ireland and nationally and look forward to doing so through innovative creative practices and by working in close partnership with others.



Invite

Discovery



Objectives	Outcomes
Deliver Branar sa Scoil with support from Rethink Ireland and Galway City Council and identify a cohort of funding partners committed to its continued delivery.	A clear understanding of the impact of a sustained arts programme for children and the school community and a sustainable future for the programme.
Continue to develop the Acorn Digital Arts Flag initiative, enhancing content and extending its reach.	A greater variety of workshops for children to enjoy, with more schools engaging with the initiative and more schools being awarded a Digital Arts Flag.
Complete the pilot stage of The Wander-full Journeys project, supported by Erasmus+ with Creative Schools and international partners.	A credible, quality concept has been developed and routes for the sustainable roll out of the project have been identified.
Sustain and develop the relationships we have with current programme partners, while seeking new alliances that extend our work.	Committed relationships with public, private and philanthropic partners who trust us to deliver on aligned goals.



You'll See, Photo : John McMahon

Priority #3

Advance the understanding and practice of great art for children.

Why this Priority?

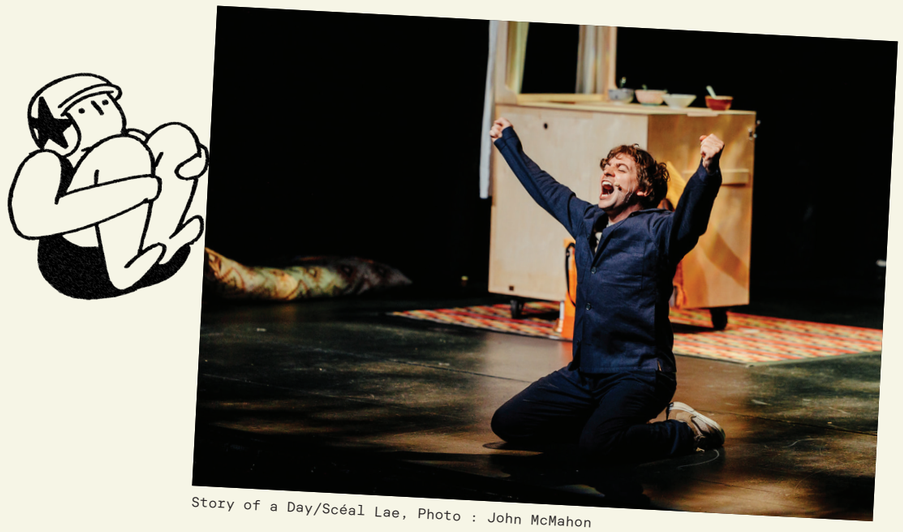
Our mission holds two aims: to create excellent arts experiences for children and to champion the creation of more and better arts experiences for children. This is how we achieve the latter.

As a leader in theatre practice and in the arts for young audiences, we believe we have a responsibility to share expertise, ideas and learning with others. We do so generously to advance the culture, conditions and capabilities that enable work for children to flourish.

Through Branar Meitheal, partnerships and advocacy, we will engender a confident community of artists, producers and organisations making, presenting and touring excellent work for young audiences and seek to influence policy and increase investment in arts for young audiences.

Champion

Art for Children



Story of a Day/Scéal Lae, Photo : John McMahon

Objectives	Outcomes
Consolidate Branar Meitheal as an integral part of our work and as a vital national programme providing bespoke capacity-building support for artists and producers making work for young audiences.	A cohort of independent artists and producers have the confidence, capabilities and connections to make and tour quality work for young audiences.
Promote the essentiality of the arts in children's lives with policy makers, peers, the media and the public, alongside other like-minded organisations.	There is recognition of and increased investment in the arts for children.
Work with others nationally to advance the culture and conditions that enable work for children to be realised.	There is a credible ecosystem that effectively supports work for children.
Continue to engage with third-level institutions to champion high-quality arts for children.	The next generation of teachers, artists and arts professionals understand the need for art in children's lives and an appreciation of high-quality arts experiences for children.

Priority #4

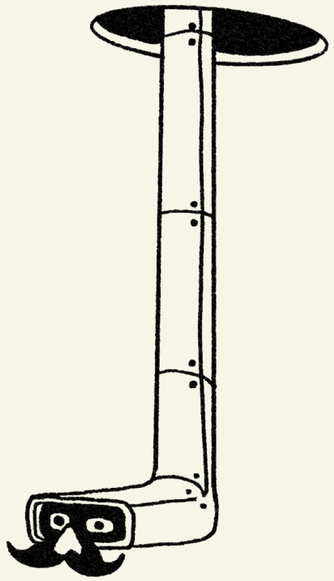


Ensure a financially robust and empowering future for Branar.

Why this Priority?

To deliver on the ambitions set out in this strategy and to make real our role as a strategic national organisation at work internationally, we must ensure our own capacity. With the certainty of uncertainty in the external environment in the coming years, we must continue to be enterprising and resourceful, a change-able organisation alert to opportunities, while responsibly managing risk and building a stable financial base for our work.

We know our people and our culture are our greatest assets. We will care for our team and those we work with as individuals and invest in them as professionals. Above all, we will continue to make real the values that distinguish Branar and which propel our success.



Secure

Our Future





How to Catch a Star, Photo : Anita Murphy

Objectives	Outcomes
Continue to deliver strong and effective leadership and governance.	Branar exemplifies best practice in fulfilling its statutory obligations and is fully compliant with the Charities Governance Code.
Sustain our unique culture and the conditions that put people first at work.	Branar is a safe and inspiring place to work.
Cultivate the relationships and opportunities that deliver a consistent, broad portfolio of income.	Enhanced financial resilience, with diverse sources of funding enabling our work.
Invest in communications to further awareness of Branar, promote our work and extend our influence.	More people know Branar and support what we stand for: wonder-full arts for children.
Understand and communicate the impact of our work.	Sound evidence is helping to drive positive change for children's experience of the arts.
Act within our means to support relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.	Branar has contributed meaningfully to the ambition for a better world.

BRANARfesto 2026

01
We love stories. We promise to always do our best to create stories that children can enjoy.

02
We will be brave, strong, generous, playful and true to who we are. Through our work we will invite children to be so too.

03
We will honour children's imagination and intelligence, and we will never patronise them.

04
Children will **ALWAYS** be at the heart of our work. They are our audience and the experts whose opinion we seek and listen to.

05
We believe that all children are creative. We will advance children's right to be creative.

06
We promise to make wonder-full art for children because we believe art should be an essential part of every childhood.

07
We will help others to make art for children, and we will work with other exciting artists to make art for children that invites wonder, imagination and joy.

08
We will shout loudly for art for children to be better understood and to be given the money and the support it deserves.

09
We believe that every child should see a play at least once. We will do our best to make that happen for children in Ireland.

10
We will be kind to the environment so that children will inherit a healthier planet to play on.

