

DCA Business Plan 2025-28



DCA

Dundee Contemporary Arts

Introduction

Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA) is a multi-arts centre and one of Scotland's foremost contemporary arts organisations. Our vision is to enrich people's lives through art, culture and creativity through our four programme areas: **Exhibitions, Cinema, Print Studio** and **Learning**.

DCA is a registered charity (SC026631) and company limited by guarantee (SC175926), comprising of two beautiful large-scale gallery spaces, two thriving cinema screens, a busy print studio, a welcoming creative learning space, an award-winning learning programme, a bustling café-bar and a popular shop.

DCA opened in 1999 as a partnership between Dundee City Council and the University of Dundee, who remain key partners. The vision for DCA was to create a visual arts centre which could bring together existing city arts venues, Seagate Gallery and Dundee Printmakers' Workshop and the Steps Theatre, and provide large-scale galleries to showcase high quality contemporary visual art. Over 25 years later, DCA has more than delivered on this early ambition and is a thriving cultural and social hub, in the centre of Dundee, which is valued and used by diverse audiences and where all are warmly welcomed. We know that high quality cultural experiences can change people's lives for the better.

We are dedicated to making Dundee a vibrant place to live, work and visit. Our safe and affordable facilities and activities enable hundreds of thousands of visitors a year, from a diverse range of communities, to have meaningful engagement with contemporary arts, develop skills and enjoy a sense of community and connection.

Over two decades of evaluation demonstrates that DCA is regarded with affection and appreciation by our visitors, fostering a genuine sense of belonging.

“Your entertainment, affordability, quirky shop, food and drink, and all-round general ‘vibe’ has thus played a significant part in keeping my head above water mentally”

- audience feedback

“Great to have this space in Dundee, everyone can benefit from having their thinking challenged and being presented with new ideas, concepts, or approaches”

-audience feedback

As the city's only contemporary art gallery of scale, independent cinema and public print workshop, DCA plays an essential role in the city's social and cultural ecology. Without DCA, Dundee's 148,000 inhabitants would have limited access to contemporary arts. DCA is also placed firmly on the international cultural map, making a major contribution to the creative life of Scotland and the UK. We are incredibly proud of the diverse programme DCA offers

We are a significant employer in the city with 78 staff, at around 45 FTE, including 23 full time and 55 part time employees, and offering work for over 30 freelancers every year. We are open to the public from 10am until late every day, and our workforce covers all programme areas – Exhibitions, Cinema, Print Studio, Learning, Communications, Visitor Services, Events, HR, Finance, Development, Operations and Facilities.

Our core funders are **Creative Scotland**, who have supported DCA as a regularly funded organisation since we were formed, and **Dundee City Council** (DCC), who are also key partners and our landlord. Four elected members of DCC sit on the DCA Board.

DCA will offer a distinctive programme from 2025-28, celebrating our **multi-arts model** with frequent collaboration and sharing across our four programme areas: **Exhibitions, Cinema, Print Studio, Learning**. This will allow artists, audiences and participants to experience a breadth of activities and explore new ways of thinking across different art forms.

Over 2025-28, our **Exhibitions** will provide career-changing, professionally impactful opportunities for artists across diverse media and backgrounds, giving early career Scottish and international artists their first major exhibitions, and championing established artists who may not have exhibited widely within Scotland. Our programme will continue to centre historically underrepresented identities and marginalised voices, including LGBTQIA+ artists, disabled artists and those from global majority backgrounds. Our Exhibitions will bring world-class work to Dundee for the benefit of our audiences, who can engage with our programme through visiting the galleries, connecting with our much-praised Visitor Assistants, through our publications, through our online resources and by attending our events for all ages, including targeted family and community activity.

DCA **Cinema** will deliver a diverse programme of new releases and classic films, including high-quality mainstream, international and arthouse titles. Over 2025-28 we will continue to expand our audiences' understanding and experience of film by curating our own festivals and seasons, and by hosting in-person events. We will work in partnership with UK and international organisations to share innovative film programmes and curated seasons, including the development of VR and XR. We will continue to develop Discovery Film Festival. This unique annual festival, which celebrated its 20th birthday in 2023, showcases the best international films for young audiences and is internationally respected as an industry leader in film education. Our schools programme will bring thousands of children and young people to DCA each year, with free resources created by teachers connecting each film with the curriculum. Public screenings will be accompanied by creative workshops, and our young people's films will be programmed by our 15-19 year-old Discovery Young Programmers.





DCA **Print Studio** will provide open access to an unrivalled range of state-of-the-art equipment and printmaking expertise. Beginners will be welcomed to develop new skills through courses and workshops; artists will be welcomed from Tayside, Scotland and internationally to use our incredible facilities in our collaborative workshop; and our residencies will offer opportunities for artists to develop their practice, often finding innovative new ways to combine and develop printmaking processes. In collaboration with our Learning team, the Print Studio will develop its innovative work on improving accessibility for people with disabilities, building on the success of our Eye Can Draw project, and pilot school placements for young people in the Print Studio. In collaboration with our Exhibitions team, the Print Studio will also deliver production residencies for exhibiting artists, allowing them to realise ambitious new work for their upcoming exhibitions.

Our **Learning** programme will provide enriching experiences for a broad range of audiences through co-designed workshops, events, targeted projects, and creative and making sessions. Activities will take place both inside DCA, particularly in our popular Create Space family room, and beyond our building, right across the city, with four key strands of Community Partnerships, Families, Schools and Young People. Over 2025-28 we will launch new projects, including a youth filmmaking programme in partnership with the Cinema team. We will also build on our transformative work with children aged 0-3 and their families, through Art at the Start, which includes Messy Play sessions and our Art Therapy service, informed by our academic research.

Vision, Mission and Values

DCA's vision, mission, aims and values are the foundation of our organisation and underpin all our activities. These key tenets shape our priorities, our organisational culture, our policies and procedures, and how we work with our staff, partners, stakeholders, funders and audiences. These are reviewed by staff and Trustees at the start of every new business planning process.

DCA Vision

Our vision is to enrich people's lives through art, culture and creativity through our four programme areas: **Exhibitions, Cinema, Print Studio** and **Learning**.

DCA Mission

DCA's mission is to inspire and engage, challenge and connect audiences, artists and participants through our vibrant programme of contemporary visual art, with exhibitions, cinema, printmaking and learning activity, in our acclaimed civic building and across the city.

DCA Values

All our work is underpinned by our values to be:

Bold: unafraid to take risk, proud of who and what we are

Open: welcoming, accessible, connected, civic

Meaningful: high quality, purposeful, stimulating, caring

Magical: belief in creating moments of joy, inspiration and transformation

Caring: we look out for each other, ourselves and our environment, operating with dignity and respect.



Aims

Aim 1: Deliver a vibrant programme of contemporary visual art, with exhibitions, cinema, printmaking and learning activity, including innovative collaboration between these core programme areas

“Dundee Contemporary Arts ... frequently shows the most thoughtful, critical and ambitious exhibitions in Scotland”

– Art Monthly, 2023

“I can’t live without the DCA Cinema!”

– audience feedback

“It’s difficult to imagine the city before it had access to the creative facilities and world class art routinely provided by DCA”

– The Skinny, March 2019

From our internationally acclaimed exhibitions, to our award-winning Learning programme; from the central role we play as Dundee’s only city-centre cinema, to the world-class facilities offered by the Print Studio; DCA is rooted and ambitious, pro-active and responsive, and unique not just in the range and quality of our offer but in our collaboration between programme areas.

DCA’s programme, across Exhibitions, Cinema, Print Studio, and Learning, is renowned, playing a central role in the cultural life of the city, Scotland and further afield. The continued delivery of our core programme, to the highest possible standard, is an essential component of fulfilling our mission. Our programme, in turn, contributes to meeting the objectives set out in Scotland’s National Performance Framework, particularly in relation to Culture, Communities, Health and Poverty.

Objectives

1. Deliver a vibrant Exhibitions programme of 3-4 shows a year, with accompanying public programme of events and publications
2. Present a diverse Cinema programme, including Discovery Film Festival, Dundead, events and curated seasons
3. Provide an open access, affordable, well-equipped Print Studio with classes, workshops, residencies and school placements
4. Co-create an enriching Learning Programme both in DCA and across the city, focusing on Community Partnerships, Families, Schools and Young People
5. Support innovative collaboration between these programme areas through targeted projects, including a new film school for young people



Aim 2: Welcome diverse audiences to our acclaimed civic building to engage with our inspiring programmes, through effective communication and outstanding visitor experiences

Successful audience connection is core to our success, and inextricably linked to our programme offer. Audience evaluation shows that people value our welcome and friendliness, the care given to all our activities and consideration given to their experiences. DCA is busy and bustling, full of diverse audiences engaging with our wide-ranging offer, from 10am to late every day.

Our Marketing Strategy sets out several key objectives for reaching and engaging with audiences; while our Audience Development Plan covers the ways we will work across programme, communications and front of house teams to reach and develop target audiences.



Objectives

1. Deliver our Marketing Strategy

- a) Continue to promote DCA's core programme in order to meet departmental targets
- b) Grow our audiences across our programmes
- c) Increase earned income to improve financial resilience
- d) Support DCA's fundraising and advocacy activity
- e) Strengthen DCA's brand
- f) Ensure environmental messaging is embedded in our communications
- g) Play a key role in Dundee's tourism activity, ensuring DCA is well-represented in campaigns, particularly in the run-up to the opening of Eden Project Dundee

2. Deliver our Audience Development Plan

- a) Grow our audiences across our programmes
- b) Develop our work with children and families
- c) Expand our work with young people, offering more ways to engage with our programme for ages 15-25
- d) Strengthen our engagement with students and universities
- e) Increase our engagement with d/Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent audiences
- f) Increase engagement with audiences from areas of multiple deprivation
- g) Develop audiences for VR
- h) Continue work to understand our audiences through a comprehensive programme of research and evaluation

Aim 3: Support artists and creative practitioners by creating the very best conditions for them to make and share their work

“Working at DCA has offered me as an artist filmmaker a rare opportunity to work with an organisation that offers 4 key areas essential to my practice: the exhibitions team have brought my film practice to the gallery, DCA’s Cinema team have carefully curated double-bills of my work for Artist Choice film programming. The Print team has supported me to develop a new edition, as well as new work for my exhibition, and the Learning team have made an exciting programme of engagement for audiences of all ages. It is hard to think of many organisations who have so much to offer and the commitment across the organisation to bring my work to new audiences has been exceptional.”

- Michelle Williams Gamaker, DCA Exhibition artist

DCA’s approach is artist centred, ensuring practitioners are given the time, resources and support to create and share their work. We support innovation at all stages of projects, with artists’ ambition and care at the forefront of our work across our programme areas.

The care and attention we pay to DCA staff also extends to the way we work with artists. All artists are contracted, are provided with our Dignity At Work policy, and are offered an access rider. Our Artist Pay Policy, developed with our artist trustees, sets out our approach to ensuring artists are paid fairly. All artists receive separate exhibition and commission fees in line with Scottish Artist Union rates, separate from per diem, production and installation costs, and we are members of FRANK, which campaigns for fair pay for artists. As well as having a number of artists on the DCA staff, there are always two artists on the DCA Board, ensuring artists’ voices are recognised and heard.

Objectives

1. Provide opportunities for artists and creative practitioners throughout the programme
2. Regularly review working conditions to ensure best practice, including pay and contracts
3. Offer opportunities to sell work through our editions programme, registered users’ sales, and Crafted market



Aim 4: Play a key role in Dundee and Scotland's cultural, civic and creative development, advocating for the city, Scotland and contemporary arts and artists' contribution to our shared cultural lives, using local, national and international platforms

Since 1999, DCA has played a central role in the regeneration of Dundee, as a cornerstone in the cultural life of the city, widely credited as paving the way for V&A Dundee, part of a sector that will welcome Scotland's first Eden Project in the coming years.

As part of the Dundee Partnership, we have a significant responsibility as civic and cultural leaders in the city and, as one of the five cultural organisations directly funded by DCC Chief Executive's office, are playing an important role in developing the city's new cultural and tourism strategies.



With four elected members of the local authority on DCA Board, regular meetings with the leadership of Dundee City Council, strong relations with our MSPs and MPs, often involving giving evidence at a parliamentary level, DCA is well placed to advocate for our and the sector's work. Our connections with the Universities of Dundee and Abertay are key, with teaching, talks, graduate prizes, project development and joint PhD research programmes. We work closely with the British Council on international projects, including hosting delegations, visits and networking events, supporting leadership training for international partners and taking part in research trips.

International dialogue and travel help our staff to gain broader perspectives and bring new knowledge into their expertise and the organisation. This helps develop staff who are better equipped for their roles and better connected within their sector, strengthening our programme and in turn enabling us to engage wider and more diverse audiences, offering richer experiences for our visitors and expanding their own sense of global connection.

Objectives

1. Play a lead role in delivering Dundee's new Cultural and Tourism Strategies (2025-30)
2. Support Dundee City Council (DCC) to achieve its priorities and ensure this is effectively communicated
3. Maintain strong networks across related cultural sectors, represent DCA at local, national and international levels on panels, boards and initiatives
4. Continue political advocacy for our work in Dundee, Holyrood and Westminster

Aim 5. Use our expertise in impactful partnership working to nurture existing relationships and develop new partnerships, bringing projects to Dundee and extending the reach of our own work

DCA's success is rooted in strong partnership working, which is a foundational element of all four of our programme areas, including with arts and cultural organisations, the third sector, education, health, social services and business sectors. We know we are stronger together and can learn and deliver impact through reciprocity at a local, national and international level. Our approach is open, welcoming and committed.

By way of example, *We Contain Multitudes* is a partnership with LUX Scotland and Collective, which aims to tackle institutional ableism and improve conditions and opportunities for disabled artists, through commissioning, training and advocacy. The partnership approach between these three organisations, and work of the disabled practitioners and staff delivering the project, is central to the success of the project, as it relies on shared learning, and ensuring recommendations for the sector can be tailored to organisations and practices of different scales. In our Cinema, our work with BFI, StoryFutures and Abertay University will enable us to continue researching and developing our VR and XR offer for audiences.

Alongside our embedded community partnerships, DCA's Learning team have developed an art therapy service through a partnership with NHS Tayside Perinatal Infant Mental Health team, with direct referrals to DCA through GPs and health workers. We will extend this through local organisations such as Homestart and parent and toddler groups.

International partnership working is embedded across our programmes. In Cinema, we will deliver international work, including showcase screenings, seasons and film festivals, such as the French Film Festival, Japan Foundation Touring Film Programme and Dundee Nablus Twinning Association. Work with the British Council and a focus on supporting cultural diplomacy with key ODA and non-ODA countries will include tours, visits and Print Studio artist residencies, which will provide opportunities for meaningful cultural exchange for artists and organisations, and allow artists to have their work seen by new audiences and access new markets.

Objectives

1. Support a range of curatorial voices and partnership events in Cinema and Exhibitions
2. Tour shows, co-commissions and presentations with UK and Scottish partners
3. Extend Art at the Start, our partnership with NHS Tayside
4. Target work in specific Dundee wards through our model of co-creation
5. Extend schools programme with Dundee City Council
6. Build DCA's reputation as a centre for research and innovation through academic research in partnership with Scottish universities



Aim 6: Value our workforce through a continued commitment to the principles of Fair Work and equity, diversity and inclusion

DCA's workforce is our strongest asset. We are committed to fair and equitable treatment of everyone we engage, as part of our belief in social justice and our understanding that EDI is central to a successful creative organisation. Fair Work and EDI are fundamental to DCA's core values and mission with the principles of inclusiveness, tolerance and fairness central to all our work. Our work in this area aligns with Scotland's National Performance Framework objective to provide Fair Work.

At DCA we refer to *equity*, rather than equality. We note the rationale behind this choice of words within our EDI policy; whilst equality means treating everyone the same regardless of their experiences, background or identity, equity recognises that people may have different advantages and barriers in society, and that we do not all have the same starting point and journeys.

From 2025-2028 we will develop a new Freelance Policy, ensuring the use of standardised contracts and that data is consistently collected on the freelancers we work with.

Our work to ensure open communication with staff includes the Staff Engagement Group, which meets regularly and which people can engage with anonymously as well as in person; fortnightly emails from the Director; regular staff newsletters; a DCA staff Teams channel; Board meeting summaries sent to all staff from our Chair; one to ones, and annual appraisals.

Objectives

1. Ensure fair pay and salary increases at all levels, not just Living Wage
2. Work to our Fair Work policy, including recognising a union
3. Continue to improve the working experience for all staff, including freelancers
4. Deliver to our EDI Action Plan



Aim 7: Improve our financial sustainability through advocacy, fundraising and entrepreneurial approaches

DCA is entrepreneurial in its approach to financial sustainability, focusing on income generation and income diversification through activities which are in line with our core values and creative ambitions.

Advocacy, particularly at a time of significant political and social change will continue to be vital. Our new Evaluation and Impact Framework will enable us to share important, meaningful evidence, with the benefit of our work understood by policy and decision makers.

Our fundraised income has increased significantly over the last 8 years, from 37% of DCA turnover in 2016 to 56% in 2023. We will build on this from 2025-28 with stretch targets, and strong storytelling about our impact. A new plan to develop legacy giving will be rolled out.

Alongside pragmatic targets for growth for Cinema, our 152 Trading Strategy focuses on increasing income through the Shop and through Hires and Events, areas which deliver well to DCA's income base.

The former VRC space, on the lower two floors of DCA, is earmarked for significant capital development, with the creation of a third cinema screen, as well as increased areas for community work, hires and events. Early research shows a significant positive potential financial benefit.

Objectives

1. Make the case for our continued funding at a city and national level
2. Grow our unrestricted fundraised income by 25% by 2027-28
3. Grow our earned income by at least 5% by 2027-28 with new targets for Cinema, as well as a new commercial strategy for Shop and Hires and Events
4. Develop plans for the former VRC space, on the lower two floors of DCA, to include a new third cinema screen



Aim 8: Reduce our carbon emissions and environmental impact across all areas of our programme and operations.

Our Environmental Policy developed by DCA’s Green Group, sets our clear aims and targets for reducing our carbon emissions and environmental impact from 2025-28.

Our building is owned and maintained by our landlords Dundee City Council (DCC), including our energy, lighting, and all building systems. We work closely with DCC on a programme of building maintenance and are delighted that they have committed a substantial capital sum to upgrades designed to improve our energy efficiency.

Beyond our building, other key areas we will focus on to reduce carbon emissions are procurement and shipping, waste management and travel. We will develop a new Waste and Recycling Policy and have begun to monitor the mode of transport used by audiences to visit DCA in order to influence customer behaviour in future. We will balance the need for international travel to facilitate research, visits and relationship building, with the need to limit carbon emissions related to travel, and our commitment to responsible activity.

All programme areas will have plans for how they will reduce their carbon emissions, waste and environmental impact, and we will continue to foreground exhibitions, films and events that explore the climate crisis and its intersection with geopolitics, equalities, gender and climate justice. As part of our Climate Adaptation work, we will develop new internal and customer-facing policies around event cancellations due to extreme weather.

Objectives

- 1. Halve our carbon emissions by 2030, from a 2020 baseline
- 2. Regularly calculate the carbon footprint of our operations, to track progress
- 3. Set specific targets for the major parts of our footprint
- 4. Ensure environmental messaging is embedded in our communications, in line with our Marketing Strategy
- 5. Ensure our programme areas both reduce environmental impact and explore the climate crisis and its intersection with geopolitics, gender equalities and climate justice



Finance, Governance and Resourcing

Our financial model is based on an approximate 50/50 split between earned income and fundraised income.

Our financial strategy for income centres on 1) strengthening relationships with funders and increasing our funding and 2) maintaining and creating sustainable earned income streams.

As it is difficult to mitigate against rising costs whilst maintaining profile and impact, we regularly review our costs and tightly control our monthly spend and staffing costs. We are proud of our Real Living Wage (RLW) accreditation, therefore it is to be expected that our wage costs represent a high percentage of our overall costs.

Our plans for the capital redevelopment of the building would have a transformational impact on our finances, generating significant additional profit per annum. However, this will require major investment and a full-scale fundraising campaign to bring to fruition, with significant challenges in the current fundraising climate.

DCA's staffing and governance structure has developed significantly over the last eight years, enabling us to improve strategic leadership, reporting and oversight, operational management, financial responsibility and staff wellbeing. There are no planned changes to our organisational design. We are confident that our current structure is the best fit for our work. We review this on an ongoing basis, in line with budgets, forming part of our risk management framework.

Organisational development is overseen by the Human Resources and Organisational Development (HROD) Board committee. Over the period of this plan, we will focus on staff wellbeing, environmental sustainability and improving the diversity of DCA's workforce, with a particular focus on representation from those from global majority and marginalised backgrounds.

DCA's Finance, Audit & Risk Committee (FAR) have financial oversight, with a membership of those experienced in accounting and financial planning. Meeting quarterly, two weeks before full Board meetings, the FAR Committee scrutinises financial reports, cashflows, and funding progress, oversees the risk register and key controls, and appoints and approves the auditors and associated processes.

The Capital Development Group (CDG) oversee progress against capital development plans, and ensure we work closely with our colleagues and partners at Dundee City Council to deliver a programme of refurbishments and repairs that meets our shared objectives.

DCA Board has an established succession plan, with term limits of four years for all Trustees, for a maximum of two terms. Board recruitment is staggered, taking place every two years, in line with a skills audit, to ensure places are filled once term limits are reached.

DCA operates a robust and collective system of risk management, assuring the Board and principal stakeholders that DCA is both legally compliant and that aims and objectives are being met through the effective identification of inherent risk, and its mitigation and management against an established risk appetite.



A Look to the Future

With Multi-Year Funding secured from Creative Scotland from 2025-28, DCA has a greater degree of financial security than we have enjoyed since 2019. With this in place, and despite ongoing economic, funding and social challenges, we will approach the coming years with optimism and confidence.

Our programme will feature new and ambitious projects from renowned artists; festivals that celebrate the richness of cinema culture for audiences from toddlers to horror fans; opportunities to make work for everyone from established artists to complete beginners; and connections with audiences from all backgrounds, in our building and across our communities. We will continue to advocate for the real, meaningful impact that culture can have in people's lives and our city's economy.

Beyond our existing work, we will continue to work on our plans to redevelop the lower floors of our building to offer our audiences an expanded programme, increase our financial resilience, and dramatically improve our building's energy performance.

As always, our success is underpinned at every turn by the support of our funders and supporters: whether through major multi-year funding or a small donation with a cinema ticket, every contribution helps us continue to enrich people's lives through art, culture and creativity.

