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**BELFAST  
INTERNATIONAL  
ARTS  
FESTIVAL**

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# Artistic Director & CEO

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## Application Pack

PRINCIPAL  
FUNDER



**arts  
council**  
of Northern Ireland



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# Chairperson's Welcome

**Thank you for your interest in the role of Artistic Director & Chief Executive of Belfast International Arts Festival.**

Belfast International Arts Festival (BIAF) is an internationally acclaimed festival of contemporary arts from home and abroad. With a core programme that takes place each autumn, the Festival showcases Belfast as a diverse and dynamic centre of culture and welcomes both loyal and new audiences of all ages and backgrounds to be inspired and delighted in a celebration of creativity from home and abroad. Our Festival has evolved in recent years to include satellite events and community activities in the spring and summer that contribute towards making Belfast an exciting place to live and work.

Richard Wakely, who has been the Festival's Artistic Director & Chief Executive for the last 12 years and who reconstituted and founded the new festival in 2015, is stepping down and will leave the company at the end of 2025.

Our team is committed to equality and inclusion, investing in talent, and collaborating with communities from different backgrounds and traditions across the city, region and island. We are proud that our commitment to sharing stories through creative practice from across the globe and from a wide variety of perspectives that continue to resonate with our audiences.

BIAF is an equal opportunity employer, and we value diversity in our programmes, across our venues and in our workforce. We actively encourage applications from currently under-represented groups, which include those from ethnic minority backgrounds and with disabilities. However you identify, and whatever background you bring with you, we welcome you to apply for this role. If though you are interested in the opportunity but are not certain about whether you fit all the criteria contained in this candidate pack, we encourage you to make contact for a confidential chat. Details are in the "How to Apply" section of this pack.

We are looking for a dynamic, entrepreneurial leader with a passion for contemporary arts and culture, who can work with us to continue to grow and evolve the Festival going forward. If this sounds like you, and you're excited by what lies ahead, then we can't wait to hear from you.

**Fiona Kane**  
**Chairperson, Belfast International Arts Festival**







# About Us

**Belfast International Arts Festival (BIAF) is the city's longest-running international arts event.**

Originally established in 1962, it was hosted by Queen's University until 2015, after which a new independent organisation (a company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity) was formed with the support of all stakeholders to deliver a new artistic vision for the event.

The mission of BIAF is to be the preeminent, progressive, international arts event within Northern Ireland, actively engaging both global and local communities in the richness and diversity of contemporary arts practice. With our partners throughout the entire city, we seek to create a distinctive environment for audiences to enjoy and participate in inspirational and transformative aesthetic experiences from world-class artists, thinkers and leaders.

**We do this by:**

- Presenting a wide range of contemporary arts and cultural events of the highest possible international standard to the widest possible audiences from home and abroad;
- Reflecting contemporary culture from across the globe to audiences from Belfast, NI and visitors to the province;
- Offering an international showcase for the best of Northern Ireland contemporary culture;
- Presenting events which cannot easily be achieved by any other UK or Irish arts organisation through innovative programming and a commitment to creating new work;
- Actively ensuring equal opportunities and access for all sections of our communities to directly experience, participate in and enjoy BIAF;
- Collaborating and partnering with arts and community organisations across Belfast to create an annual city wide, cultural celebration;
- Ensuring BIAF has adequate financial resources and expertise to fulfil its mission and address its overall sustainability.

**Our curatorial approach is informed by guiding principles that reflect the importance of:**

- Global Connections
- Contemporary and Inter-disciplinary arts practice
- Community
- Collaboration and Partnership
- Access and Diversity



**The core festival programme takes place over three plus weeks from mid-October each year and across the city of Belfast.**

It includes artistic programming across the Performing Arts, which focuses on leading artists from Theatre, Dance, Literature, Talks, Poetry, Visual and Digital Art, Film, Opera and free large scale outdoor events. Increasingly, BIAF presents events at other times in the year, for example in April 2023 with events to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Peace Agreement and over the Summer 2024 co-promoting Threads of Empowerment: Conflict Textiles' International Journey with and at the Ulster Museum.

**Key performance indicators from the 2024 edition include:**

- 335 events over 42 days
- 2024 Festival Audience: 61,732
- Average ticket price £14.18
- 63 free performance
- Featured companies, artists and speakers from 16 countries across five continents including China, USA, Sweden, Mali and Palestine.
- 34 venues and locations across Belfast.
- Box office data reveals that 47.9% of bookers were from Belfast, 41.8% from the rest of NI, and 10.3% from Out-of-State
- 301 pieces of media coverage secured (Aug-Nov 2024), with a reach of 23.4m
- 43,500 social media followers (Facebook, Instagram & X)
- 51,000 users of BIAF website
- E-newsletter subscriber database increased by 4% to 7,200 with an average open rate of 42%

Details of the programme for recent editions of BIAF, including most recently 2024, can be found online at [belfastinternationalartsfestival.com](https://belfastinternationalartsfestival.com).

# Our Team

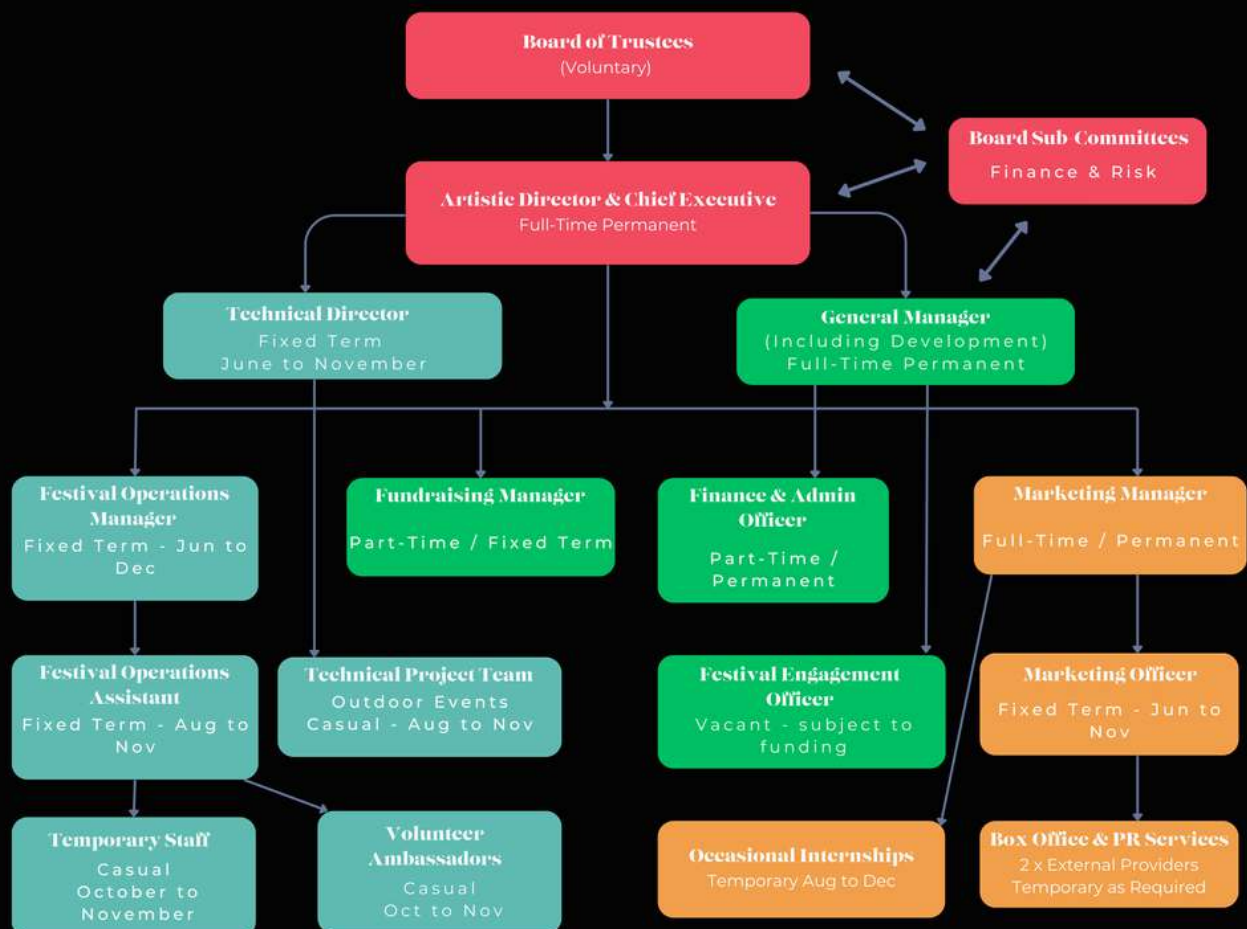
BIAF has a team of full-time and part-time staff covering key areas of programming, finance, community engagement and marketing.

We supplement this on a seasonal basis with external freelance expertise in production and technical management and marketing and alongside volunteers. Currently there are 4 employees (3.5 full-time equivalent), plus freelancers and seasonal staff.

The team is supported by a highly engaged Board of Directors (also acting as Trustees), whose responsibilities include strategic oversight of the charity; financial probity, viability and business planning; meeting charitable and legal obligations; and managing risk.

The Board meet 4 to 6 times a year and are supported by a Finance & Audit Sub-Committee, that also meets 4 to 6 times a year with the remit to oversee the proper adherence to the organisation's Financial Policy and Procedures.

## BELFAST INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL – ORGANISATIONAL CHART 2025-26



Find out more about our [Board and Staff](#).





# Constitution & Finances

**Belfast International Arts Festival is an independent arts organisation constituted as a company limited by guarantee and is registered as a charity in Northern Ireland.**

**It is governed by a Board of Directors, who are also Trustees of the Company with executive duties and responsibilities resting with the Artistic Director & Chief Executive.**

**At the last Annual General Meeting of the Company held in September 2024, the audited accounts for the year ending 31 March 2023 indicated a turnover of £772,000 and total accumulated reserves of £94,417. We continue to work hard to diversify our income portfolio, at the centre of which is a broad range of stakeholders who financially support the Company. We are grateful to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (principal funder), Belfast City Council, British Council NI and Tourism Northern Ireland for their core annual revenue support.**

**In addition, we currently receive project funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Irish Government through their Reconciliation Fund and were successful in bidding for a commission award from Belfast 2024 (to produce a new site specific dance work, Touch Hear Feel by Helen Hall). Most recently, a unique partnership comprising Belfast International Arts Festival, Féile an Phobail, Eastside Arts and Galway based street spectacle theatre company Macnas, were successful in bidding for a Creative Ireland Youth Award, whilst we were one of only 23 successful applications out of 1200 to receive an award from the British Council's International Collaboration Fund. We also attract financial support from the private sector ranging from Belfast Harbour to Destination CQ Bid alongside grants from trusts and foundations such as Arts & Business NI, the Foyle Foundation and Halifax Foundation.**

**Continuing to grow and diversify our income is central in achieving our artistic ambitions.**



# The Role

**The Artistic Director & Chief Executive reports directly to the Board of Directors via the Chairperson and is responsible for both the artistic leadership and vision of BIAF and the business resources of the Company.**

**The Artistic Director & Chief Executive curates and produces an annual programme that builds on BIAF's reputation as one of Ireland's leading contemporary arts and cultural events and within the Company's mission, values and financial resources. The aim is to create a high quality programme from home and abroad that not only entertains but also enlightens and resonates with residents of and visitors to Belfast.**

**The Artistic Director & Chief Executive will ensure BIAF continues to be recognised globally for the quality and internationalism of its performing arts programme. As a creative leader they will drive diversity within the arts and within contemporary society and ensure the organisational culture is inclusive, collaborative, safe and supportive; as well as artistically bold and commercially ambitious.**

**The Artistic Director & Chief Executive oversees all aspects of the multi-disciplinary artistic programme for each Festival, collaborating with arts practitioners across Belfast and beyond to create, produce and deliver a programme of events that showcase the best of local and worldwide talent. They will promote and maintain an organisational culture which values the highest standards - both in executing the artistic vision and in management practice - drawing the very best from the team of permanent, temporary and freelance staff.**

## **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

**The Artistic Director & Chief Executive exercises their expertise and judgement to create and produce annual Festival programmes that bring ambition, diversity, excellence, excitement and innovation in the arts, and extend the experience of audiences and artists. At all times, the Artistic Director & Chief Executive should be cognisant of the mission and values of BIAF when creating their artistic programme and considering the artistic vision for the future of the Festival. In addition, the Artistic Director & Chief Executive will craft a comprehensive artistic vision, strategy, and plan that extends across their tenure, paving the way for exciting developments and sustained growth.**





## **ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP**

- **Create, drive and promote an ambitious, bold artistic vision and identity for BIAF.**
- **Provide inspirational and motivational artistic leadership for BIAF's artistic and community partners, funders and stakeholders.**
- **Devise highly anticipated artistic programming across artforms, which focuses on significant artists from Theatre, Dance, Music, Literature, Visual and Digital Arts together with large scale outdoor events.**
- **Creatively develop BIAF's creative programming that encourages and promotes reconciliation between communities of different backgrounds and tradition in the city and across the island of Ireland.**
- **Build on BIAF's previous significant contributions to major national and international arts and cultural events ranging from Ireland's Decade of Centenaries programme and 14-18 Now, the UK's arts programme for the First World War centenary to international exchanges and celebrations promoted by the British Council and overseas cultural agencies. Work closely with stakeholders and partners to ensure BIAF plays and contributes to future and similar major celebrations of arts and culture for the benefit of the citizens of Northern Ireland.**
- **Create an international showcase platform for leading artists and ensembles based in Northern Ireland and in partnership with Culture Ireland and other interested funding agencies.**
- **Develop and grow Embrace, BIAF's on-going programme of public engagement and professional development activities and events which is aimed at involving communities and groups throughout the city and across the festival programme. The events in Embrace are designed to both encourage active participation in the arts and to enhance audience enjoyment and understanding of specific productions and events presented in the programme.**
- **Lead on creative collaborations and commissioning together with occasional producing/co-producing of new works for the festival programme.**
- **Attract and sustain a large and enthusiastic audience to events that take place in arts and community venues and settings and across the city.**
- **Through considered and thoughtful programming, preserve the enthusiasm of existing and highly engaged supporters of BIAF whilst attracting new audiences and participants.**
- **Celebrate and promote excellence of local and worldwide creative thinking and practice, artistic innovation and delivery and public engagement.**



## **STRATEGIC & BUSINESS LEADERSHIP**

- Overall leadership, artistic direction and operational responsibility for BIAF including management of the programme, festival team and all business resources.
- Advise the Board on strategic policy direction and forward plan BIAF's objectives, activities and resources to support the delivery of an ambitious vision for the Company. Lead on the development of the strategic plan, annual business plans and funding applications and KPI's that reflect agreed performance targets.
- Lead, inspire, manage and enable the development of the BIAF team to ensure the successful delivery of BIAF's strategic and business plans, artistic vision and financial targets.
- Lead the relationship with core funders including, our principle stakeholder, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.
- Lead and oversee fundraising activities and build support from current funding sources as well as working with the BIAF Board and team to identify and secure new income sources in order to realise our future programming ambitions.
- Ensure that BIAF's programme, activities and operations reflect best practice relating to equalities, diversity and inclusion.
- Demonstrate strong financial and business acumen in the curation and delivery of the artistic programme and associated activities.
- Successfully balance artistic innovation, commercial imperatives and wider economic realities within the agreed budget.
- Work with the Board to set the strategic direction of the Company and ensure a balanced and sustainable business model with a healthy appetite for artistic risk.
- Foster excellent and productive relationships with NI, ROI, UK based and international artists and industry partners, including other festivals, promoters, venues and performing arts organisations.



## **GOVERNANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT**

- The Artistic Director & Chief Executive currently holds the formal post of Company Secretary of BIAF and as such ensures that the Company complies with current charity legislation. This arrangement is under review with the responsibilities of Company Secretary likely to be delegated to the General Manager at the 2025 Annual General Meeting of the Company. It is also possible that at some point in the future, the Artistic Director & Chief Executive may be co-opted on to the Board of Directors, subject to the outcome of a separate review of the Company's financial and constitutional arrangements.
- Working with BIAF's General Manager to ensure that BIAF's charitable objectives are met and complies with all necessary statutory, regulatory and charitable responsibilities including maintaining strong and effective relationships with key stakeholders.
- Attending and contributing to meetings of the Finance & Audit Sub Committee.
- Working with the Chairperson, Board of Directors and members of the Finance & Audit Sub Committee to ensure high standards of governance and transparency across BIAF.
- Ensure effective and responsible financial leadership, including setting of the annual budget, maintaining robust cost controls and maximising income. Ensure resources are well managed, and innovatively and effectively deployed to deliver a programme of activities that reflects BIAF's mission and values and meets both the strategic objectives of the Company and stakeholder targets.
- Working with BIAF's General Manager to lead on the overall management of risk within BIAF, ensuring that lines of accountability are clear, followed through on, and well understood and systems are in place for monitoring, evaluating, and managing risk to secure the reputation and physical, virtual, and intellectual resources of the organisation.
- To act always in the best interest of BIAF, carefully managing the public profile and brand reputation of the organisation.





## EXTERNAL RELATIONS & ADVOCACY

- Develop relationships and collaborations locally, nationally and throughout the world that enhance the work, profile and reputation of the Festival in Belfast, Northern Ireland, across the island of Ireland, the UK and overseas.
- Foster good relationships with all Festival partners and stakeholders, public, corporate and individual, ensuring clear and effective communication channels are established.
- Develop and maintain good relationships with industry partners, including other festivals, promoters, venues and performing arts organisations, locally, nationally and internationally.
- Advocate for, and represent BIAF, communicating its aims to key opinion formers and decision makers within relevant government, industry, community and corporate sectors in Northern Ireland and overseas.
- Exercise leadership in national and international cultural conversations and relations, maintaining BIAF's role in supporting cultural diplomacy, particularly within the current Shared Island Initiative.
- Act as the lead spokesperson and public face for the organisation and maintain good, productive relations with the press and other media.

In summary, the responsibilities of the Artistic Director & Chief Executive covers a wide spectrum of artistic, creative and business leadership, ranging from the strategic development of BIAF's vision to the practical delivery of its activities and programme.

This multifaceted role ensures that BIAF continues to thrive and evolve as a dynamic and culturally significant event on the island of Ireland and across the UK, not only for the present but for the future as well.



# The Person

**Job Title:** Artistic Director & Chief Executive

**Reports to:** Chairperson of the Board of Directors

## Essential Criteria

### KNOWLEDGE & EXPERIENCE

- A substantial and successful track record gained at a senior level within an arts or cultural organisation in the UK and/or internationally.
- Significant experience in commissioning, producing or presenting at least one performance related artform together with a strong knowledge of and interest in all art forms and a commitment to working locally, nationally and internationally.
- A deep knowledge of Ireland's and/or the UK's cultural and creative sector and an understanding of the context in which BIAF operates, and the role cultural organisations play in other cross-cutting agendas including health and wellbeing, social/economic development and the visitor economy.
- Excellent entrepreneurial, commercial and financial skills, including experience and understanding of financial management at a senior management level.
- Experience of fundraising for an arts and cultural organisation, building dynamic relationships and partnerships and demonstrable success in this area.
- Demonstrable knowledge and success in enabling equality, diversity and inclusion, and in proactively addressing issues of inequality and discrimination.
- Good experience of building effective politically astute, diplomatic and productive working relationships and partnerships with Boards of Directors/Trustees, executive management teams, staff and unions, strategic funders and partners including City Councils, Local Authorities and specific arts funding bodies, such as Arts Councils.
- A record of successful resource management, budget formulation and monitoring and control of the performance of people, finances and physical resources in an arts or cultural organisation.
- In-depth understanding of the balance between financial, audience and artistic needs.



## **SKILLS & ABILITIES**

- Ability to inspire, foster and champion innovation and creativity with a wide range of stakeholders and audiences, building effective artistic strategies and policies.
- Excellent management skills and judgement developed through holding leadership role(s) in the arts.
- Strong influencing and negotiating skills.
- A persuasive and articulate communicator, experienced at diplomacy and of presenting across a wide range of stakeholders.
- An ability to build and lead motivated and effective teams, that plan and respond with agility and ambition to internal and external change.
- Inclusive leadership skills that include the ability to empower others, remove barriers for those marginalised, and inspire an ambitious and inclusive working culture where everyone can take pride in their connection to the Company.





# Summary of Terms & Conditions

- **Contract for 5 years with option to extend by mutual consent.**
- **Six-month probationary period.**
- **Reasonable travel and subsistence expenses when travelling on BIAF business**
- **Contribution to relocation expenses.**
- **It is envisaged that the role will have a salary in the range of £60,00 to £66,000 per annum, subject to skills and experience.**
- **Annual leave of 33 days per annum paid holiday (including NI public and bank holidays).**
- **Employer Workplace Pension contribution.**

**Belfast International Arts Festival's offices are located in the Cathedral Quarter in Belfast's city centre.**

**We currently operate within a hybrid working structure whereby staff can opt to work from home on a Monday and Friday but are required to be in the office for the remainder of the week. This pattern is suspended for the run up to, the duration of and for a short period following the end of the festival programme whereby all staff are office-based for the entirety of the working week.**



# How to Apply

Please provide a written personal statement telling us why you want to be the Artistic Director and Chief Executive of Belfast International Arts Festival and the qualities and experiences you would bring to the role and how those meet the criteria outlined in this document. Statements should be no longer than three A4 pages.

Please also include your CV. Links to videos of examples of your work can also be included in your application and will be welcomed.

Applications should be emailed to:  
[recruitment@belfastinternationalartsfestival.com](mailto:recruitment@belfastinternationalartsfestival.com)

If you would find it more accessible to submit your application in a different format, personal statements of up to 5-minutes in length will also be welcomed in video format (preferably mp4 or .mov files).

**The closing date for applications is 5pm, Friday 4th July 2025.**

Belfast International Arts Festival is committed to being an inclusive employer and recruiting a workforce that is as diverse as the communities we serve. However you identify, and whatever background you bring with you, we welcome you to apply for this role.

For an informal and confidential conversation with the current Artistic Director and Chief Executive about the role, please contact [recruitment@belfastinternationalartsfestival.com](mailto:recruitment@belfastinternationalartsfestival.com) to arrange an appointment.

If you do not meet all of the criteria but can demonstrate strategies for how you could develop in role, we would encourage you again to have a conversation with the current Artistic Director and Chief Executive before applying.

If you have a disability, please indicate in your application whether you need any specific assistance or adjustments to enable you to be interviewed if invited. We will consider applications from people who wish to work flexibly. If you require any access support during the application and interview process, please contact [recruitment@belfastinternationalartsfestival.com](mailto:recruitment@belfastinternationalartsfestival.com) and we will make the appropriate arrangements.

As an Equal Opportunities Employer, we collect data to measure the effectiveness of our recruitment methods, to ensure that they are fair. Applicants for this post are therefore requested to complete and return the attached Equal Opportunities Monitoring Questionnaire as part of the recruitment process.



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