



Boom ! Inc Trustees Annual Report 2023 - 2024

The report was approved at the 2023-2024 AGM on 29th January 2025.

Boom Studios provides a range of year-round activities to fulfil its mission and purpose. These activities are

- Studios for artists, designers and makers to work from.
- A year round programme of creative workshops and activities.
- Professional development and support for artists, designers and makers.

It continued with delivery during April 2023 - March 2024, continuing with a self-sustaining business model.

For 2023/2024 the programme main achievements were :

- an increase in the delivery of our workshops , supported by digital engagement.
- the increase in income generation to support the programme of work stands.
- increase audience engagement with our activities.
- investment into human resources with the creation of a 1 x part-time role, Community Coordinator.
- delivery of 2 x annually funded programmes. (Art for the Heart & Open Art)

We continued to support our creative facilitators, with the development of “The Workshop” Membership that provides a range of supporting services and training specifically for creative facilitators.

This includes venue hire, a booking system, insurance marketing support and GDPR and additional training and access to other opportunities to work.

In 2023/2024 the Creative Days Programme generated £30673.

We have provided quality arts experiences to the wider public, through the delivery of 447 (+39 from previous year) creative workshops.

Of these , We have hosted 132 events that have focused on the sharing of technical, professional and entrepreneurial skills.

This year we have had 3259(+615 from previous year) participants in our workshops who spent on average £10.62(+£2.44 from previous year) per workshop and increase from the previous year of

During this year we have continued to develop and deliver activities under 3 key themes
It should be noted that during this year we provided 52 free of charge workshops for the Open Art Projects, which can be attributed to the increased activity and participation numbers.

“Trade” - Professional Development

The focus of this strand in 23/24 was to provide support through a blended delivery model. With online content and monthly meet-ups taking place.

Over the year, we have had 14 local artists, designers and makers that engaged with the professional development programme, providing skills, training and support for creative practices that are fostering entrepreneurial approach.

This year saw more non-studio members using this service.

This year there were more artists, joining and then dropping out. There were difficulties in maintaining commitment to the monthly meet-ups.

This year we included, 1-2-1 finance mentoring

There was little up-take this year in the hot-desking and co-working session, mainly due to a lack of frequent marketing/communications.

We are also including activities specific to artists. For example Life Drawing.

We delivered workshops/activities under this theme including Life Drawing, Abstract Art, Meet-ups, peer-2-peer training, support and mentoring and skills sharing.

“Creative Days” - community arts programme.

This is our year round programme delivered for local residents and visitors to the area to take part in creative activity.

It has evolved from the needs of the community and the needs of our local facilitators.

It is centred on the delivery of a range of creative or cultural activities that local residents wish to engage in. This year it has included a wide variety of activities delivered on a regular basis.

It includes -

Abstract Art in person and digital delivery.

Art Mash-Ups for families.

Art for the Heart - Teens Art Journaling (subsidised by ACNI)

Art for the Heart - Adult Art Journaling

Street Art Walking Tours

Field Sketch-booking.

Dry-point Etching

Homeschooling Art Clubs
iCreate Digital Art Club
Jewellery for Teens (subsidised by ACNI)
Landscape Painting Course
Life Drawing
Linocut Printmaking
Messy Mornings (Parent and Toddler Art Sessions)
Oil Painting
Teen Special Effects Make-up (11yrs-15yrs)
Workshops with Søren Grene - Festive Crafting
Open Arts (commissioned by ND YMCA)

It is influenced by the needs of the community and our facilitators.
This programme has delivered a total of 48 different workshops or classes.

This year the delivery continued with the Boom Digital Hub, offering 1 activities as blended delivery (online and In Real life simultaneously) reaching people that may have barriers to engaging with arts activities, particularly people with parental responsibilities.

Reach-Out (& Pull-in)

Boom Studios is viewed as a space where people are allowed to be creative, have fun, develop skills and connect to each other.

We have supported outside organisations to deliver their work including:

- Ards & North Down BC -Parks, Tourism and Arts,
- Belfast Works Connects(East Belfast Mission)
- British Council
- Individuals requiring space for social, personal groups or meetings.
- CO3
- Factory Community Forum(Larne)
- Morrow Communications Ltd
- North Down YMCA,
- Open House Festival,
- Redwood Surgery, Bangor Health Clinic
- Speakers For Schools
- The Be Kind Project
- The Nerve Centre
- Uhub
- Ulster University
- Volunteer Now
- Workwest

This year we have seen an increase in request for use of our spaces to support personal development and the provisions of training space.

This work created £28,647.

It must be noted that the increase this year was due to a large piece of contract work that we delivered for North Down YMCA totalling £16,193.

The remaining total is £12,454

We have continued to engage with other organisations to develop, support and advocate for the local creative sector. This includes positions on the Bangor Chamber of Commerce Board (relationship finished in March 2024), Seacourt Print Workshop Board of Trustees, the Bangor City Centre Advisory group and the Asylum Seekers/Migrants/Refugees Working Groups, PeacePlus Partnership, North Down Coastal Path Working Group.

Benefits of memberships

We engage with the European Creative Hubs Network, learning from our peers across Europe and attending their meet-ups this year in Porto and Vienna.

We have attended training from a number of our membership organisations.

Arts & Business NI

Social Enterprise NI

Play Resource

North Down Community Network.

In 2023/24 we continues to invest in the use of our digital platforms focusing on providing

- Consistent communications with different sectors of our audience.
- Use of a range of communication methods including
 - email newsletters
 - Instagram/Facebook
 - www.boomstudios.org.uk
 - Google for business.

This has resulted in a growth in our engagement with

- Total digital audience of 20K Website visits(+31%), and 1527 (+304) on our newsletter.
- 6131 on our social media platforms, with an Increase of 599 followers between Facebook and Instagram (+10.7 %)

Charitable Purpose

Education - through the delivery of 175 different types of regular workshops that develop artistic and creative skills, and created confidence including Life Drawing, Drawing Skills, Painting Skills, Quilting and Sewing Skills, Artists Support, Digital Art.

New additions this year have included Jewellery Making, Landscape Painting, Field Sketch-booking,

Through 23/24 we have provided 259 workshops that has provoked participation in arts and creative arts activity.

Through the coordination of a shared workspace we have provided workspace for 39 artistic and creative practices.

We have delivered a number of opportunities and supporting services for the wider local artists and creative practitioners to develop their work including signposting to training, Professional support through the Trade programme , peer to peer exchange, mentoring and 1-2-1 coaching and paid work opportunities.

Mission

This year we delivered on our mission as we continue with face to face delivery. However, we have continued to continue to use the learning and skills gained from the pandemic and change for the better, with the use of digital platforms and beginning to understand how to use AI to support our work.

Funding

This year Boom! Inc continued with a focus on income generation, but continued to apply for funding for specific projects.

This year continued to see changes in our income streams as we move back to income generation and away from reliance of CV19 Recovery funding, whilst maintaining reserves.

The rising energy costs and other resources required to run a social enterprise/creative hub have significantly impacted our finance model.

This has resulted in prioritising projects that will reduce energy costs in the future and increase our core income.

Boom! Inc has recognised that through funding streams, we will be able to develop our work.

Where possible we continued to have a “paying it forward” ethos to ensure we and our community of artists, designers and makers have a strong and sustainable presence.

This has included applying for 12 different funding pots through 2023/24 , with various successes and failures.

Funding Application	Amount	Comments
LMP Funding for Training	£500	Not Successful
Access and Inclusivity Grants	£2000	Not Successful

Cultural Heritage Regeneration.	£3000	Successful with match-funding.
Go Succeed - Business Development Fund	£4000	Not Successful
National Lottery - Sustainable Community Buildings	£40,000	Phase 1 successful
LMP Funding for Training	£500	Not Eligible
AND BC Experience Development Grants	£800	Successful
Digital Flexible Transformation Fund.	£5000	Not Eligible
TBUC Good relations to support Open Arts Development	£17,000	Not Successful
ANDBC - Arts Project	£1000	£500 awarded
Public Funding Applications		
ACNI Arts & Young People	£7175	Successful
AND BC Multi-Annual Grant	£4950	Successful
Total Received	£16,800	

Through 2023/24 we continue to have a clear strategy that will support the survival of our organisation, our immediate community of studio tenants, facilitators and local artists/designers makers aligned to our purpose through :-

- The Investment and support for strategic marketing and an advertising budget for workshops
- Raising investment in and continued delivery of the Trade forum to develop and establish continuous professional development for the creative industries ;

We have maintained a high level of studio use and occupancy through 2023/2024, and continued to provide an affordable space for the wider community to engage in creative activity, to provide a platform for arts and creative activity that is accessible, to increase the area that we catch our audience from and to create a

place where the local creative sector can develop their skills and their network and their confidence.

Highlights:

The highlights of this year have included the investment from outside organisations to help us support and develop our work, involvement in national pilot programmes, visits to European Hubs, improving our human resources and communications.

The year started with a group exhibition in Castle Espie's prestigious Graffen Gallery.

In April 2023 we began to deliver 'Open Arts' for people newly arrived in the area with financial support from The Executive Office, via Ards and North Down Borough Council and North Down YMCA we established a weekly drop-in art making session and other activities.

In April 2023 we published our next Strategic Plan, with ambitious goals for Boom! Inc over the next 5 years,

Following on from an award from The Arts Council of Northern Ireland to support our work with young people, we continued to deliver our "Art for the Heart" project that was also supported by the AND Arts Challenge Fund in 2023.

The evaluation process from the first year identified some learning that has led to the pilot of a Youth Volunteer Programme in early 2024, that we are now actively seeking funding for.

This year we have continued to benefit from 2 freelance roles and have embedded 1 part-time Community Coordinator role into the organisation. This has significantly improved our communications and event delivery.

We have continued to deliver a signposting service, that is gathering the opportunities for the sector into 1 place and communicating this out on a regular basis.

In September we joined our European peers in Vienna for Creative Skills Week.

This year there was an opportunity to extend the conference and the learning and host an event locally. We invited creative organisations and local government departments together with the aim to start a conversation. Inspired by the Cyantopyes method of an Open Space format, we identified the overlapping challenges, shared information on current work and common themes in our work.

At Boom we hope that working together at a strategic level could help to mitigate cuts to funding and services in the creative industries and by collaborating we can create maximum benefit for this industry, from our individual programmes.

Our studios members have continued working in a creative hub together, with a strong community of creatives developing as we work on projects together.

This year we have continued to develop the Trade Project, 9 Studio members and 6 non-members. This forum began in the Autumn as a dedicated space to think about their creative practice, upskill, and develop peer to peer support. We are continuing seeing the impact of this work with the individuals practice developing, increasing in income and improved confidence.

Benefits to Participants

Boom Studios continues to be a space where our participants are allowed to be creative, have fun, develop skills and connect to each other.

Participants in our activities have also been able to develop skills and confidence through the continued delivery of workshops.

We have maintained a high level of use and occupancy through 2023/24, despite the financial pressures on people. Creating a place where the local creative sector can develop their skills, their network and their confidence.

We provide an affordable and safe space for the wider community to engage in creative activity, to provide a platform for arts and creative activity that is accessible to marginalised groups of people.

Challenges

The biggest challenge this year for the organisation has been to ensure that enough income has been generated to cover the significant costs in energy, alongside a general rise in costs for services, art materials etc.

We are still experiencing a slight “hangover” from the pandemic. . This can be explained by the change in the expectations of what we are able to deliver with-in our income levels.

Social Impact

Our work output was valued at over £1 million (£1,046,776.42), which represents a social return on investment of £9.24 of benefit for every £1 invested in Boom Studios during 2023, a significant increase from £7.83 in 2021-22.

In 2021, Boom Studios already demonstrated a strong social impact with an SROI of £7.83. This was for the COVID/recovery year so we were limited in some ways back then, but were able to innovate in others, such as digital delivery. Since then, back out in normal operations, we have continued to innovate and expand our reach, leading to the SROI of £9.24 in 2023.

Our work outputs were categorised as meeting 7 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals - Decent Work and Economic Growth, Sustainable Cities and Communities, Reduced Inequalities, No Poverty, Partnerships for the Goals, Good Health and Well-Being, and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Some of the elements we submitted include:

Expanded Programs and Workshops: Boom Studios continues to champion local artists facilitating workshops - leading to the Creative Days art programme. Open to all, we have all sorts of art classes from painting and drawing to jewellery making, art journaling and street art and sketching walking tours - all happening in Bangor on a year-round basis.

Community Engagement: The studio's commitment to community engagement played a crucial role. Collaborations with local schools, businesses, and other organisations helped Boom Studios reach a wider audience. Events with our partners such as Ards & North Down Borough Council and YMCA North Down, and funding from Arts Council NI helped us to reach wider audiences particularly in teenagers, newcomers to Bangor and tourists. Alongside our new volunteer programme, our community art stalls, Open Art sessions and immersive art events created a strong, accessible community offering, alongside the Creative Days programme.

Support for Local Artists: Boom Studios provided invaluable support to local artists by offering studio space, networking & professional development opportunities, and platforms to showcase their work. This not only boosted the local art scene but also contributed to the economic well-being of the artists.

Mental Health and Wellbeing: Creativity is long-proven to benefit the wellbeing of participants. Whether as relaxation or art therapy, satisfaction at gaining new skills or creating things via traditional hands-on craft, it's vital for community wellbeing that people can access local creative outlets.

Sustainability Practices: The studio's commitment to sustainability also played a part. Although our buildings are old, we do what we can in terms of recycling, reducing energy consumption, reusing materials, innovating and experimenting with paint disposal, and with a 10 year lease we are also going through steps to see what capital investments we can explore to improve the infrastructure of the HQ building.

The increased SROI indicates that Boom Studios' impact extends far beyond our immediate beneficiaries. The skills learned and the confidence gained by participants have a ripple effect, influencing their families, friends, and the broader community. Whether by encouraging more people to join them at Boom, spreading the word and awareness of art services in the Borough, or enjoying arts events and street art galleries around Bangor, the studio's role in fostering a vibrant cultural scene contributes to the City's attractiveness as a place to live, work, and visit.

Our full Social Values Report for 2023 are available [here](#).

