

Green Arts Initiative in Ireland's Guide to Environmental Policies



The creation and embedding of a strong environmental policy is essential for any organisation aiming to affect their environmental impact. It should sit at equal priority alongside Health and Safety and Equalities policies.

This guide aims to provide support on the creation, implementation and use of environmental policies, offering suggestions of structure and what to include, as well as examples.

The guide is designed for arts organisations who are just starting out, and for those who are a little further down the line and looking to develop their current environmental ambitions.



As environmental sustainability concerns become more prominent, the motivations and requirements for arts organisations to affect their environmental impact continues to grow. As well as meeting growing funding, reporting and legal requirements, improving your environmental sustainability can also save you money and help your staff to work more efficiently.

Your policy doesn't need to be a weighty document that gathers dust on your office shelf. It should be something into which everyone has regular input and understands, and which makes it easy for staff to make an environmentally sustainable choice in your organisation. Most importantly, it should have backing and approval from your senior management.

Getting started

Starting to create your environmental policy – especially for the first time – can sometimes feel daunting. Begin by asking yourself these key questions:

- Do you have management support for your policy?
- Who contributes to writing your policy?
- Which activities are covered by your policy commitments?
- How are you going to fulfil the commitments?
- How will your policy actions be carried out across the organisation?
- How will you develop and improve your policy?

Developing your policy

In developing your policy, there are several things to consider to ensure that your policy is unique and useful to your organisation. Here are some steps to ensure this:

1. Involve staff in your policy development

It's important to remember that policies will vary between organisations so the key to developing a really effective policy is to build an awareness of all of the activities you engage in within your organisation. You should begin by developing a Green Team and you can use our [Creating A Green Team](#) resource document which can be downloaded from our website.

It's good to involve the people who are most involved with these activities to help you develop the actions associated with your policy. Discussing your policy on a regular basis with staff and setting targets for improvement makes your policy even more effective in establishing more sustainable behaviours within the organisation.

Each organisation will be at a different stage in their environment work and will also have different key areas they choose to focus on, although many of the issues facing arts organisations when it comes to carbon management are similar.

2. Think about boundaries and scope

When creating or updating your environmental policy it is important to think about the boundaries of what you have control over and what you feel you can influence. Your policy will eventually look at ways that each activity can become more environmentally sustainable. It's useful to look at example policies to see how other organisations have tackled this.

3. Don't start from scratch

Many Irish arts organisations are beginning to address their environmental impacts and the sector is in the early stages of creating environmental policies, but you can find many good policies in Scotland and other parts of the UK. Click below for some examples of both simple and more detailed environmental policies.

Creative Carbon Scotland Sustainability Policy

Creative Carbon Scotland Travel Policy
National Theatre of Scotland Environmental Policy
Battersea Arts Centre Environmental Policy & Action Plan
The Tron Environmental Policy

4. Break it down into manageable chunks

Make a list of the topics which you would like to include such as energy, travel, waste etc. and for each topic think of one or two actions you are going to do in the short term. If possible, also think about how you hope to develop your actions in future, on an annual or extended timescale.

For example, if you are a building-based organisation, you will probably want to consider your use of building energy and water and most organisations will want to consider staff business travel, so these will appear as topics within your policy. When thinking of actions, it's important to keep your aims achievable but to also note your aspirations for the next step.

5. Think about processes

It is crucial to think about the processes which surround your policy so you should discuss these actions with relevant staff to construct a realistic set of actions. An environmental policy isn't just a piece of paper but a set of processes for organisational change. For example, embed equality, diversity, and inclusion into your environmental policy so that it won't conflict with your equalities policy. Once you have focussed in on your topics and actions you can write your policy on a well thought out basis and you will be ready take action as soon as it is agreed with your management body.

6. Engage Senior Management

Getting top-level commitment to your environmental work is key to embedding positive behaviours across your organisation, and there are financial, regulatory, reputational and social/artistic benefits for organisations to grow their environmental sustainability.

Without their leadership from the top it will be difficult to implement changes in your organisation. Having CEO and/or Board contribute to, and sign off, your policy makes it easier for other members of staff to integrate monitoring or reduction activities into their weekly routines, or to make new investments in efficient technology or infrastructure more likely.

7. Implementing your policy

Once your environmental policy is created and has approval from senior management, it should become a working document with practical relevance to your organisation.

In order to do this, you might want to consider:

- **How do people have access to the policy?** It could be included in staff handbooks or contracts, on your website or displayed in your office, but staff awareness of its existence, and how it applies to their position, is essential to its success.
- **What are the policy commitments?** Do you have any milestones or commitments that you would like to achieve, such as a percentage reduction in energy consumption, a proportion of staff trained as green champions, or a date by which you want to have gone paperless?
- **Do you have an action plan to accomplish this?** Planning out a rough timescale for any milestones, who should be involved, and where action will need taken will help to shape the pathway by which you implement your environmental policy.
- **Where does the authority come from?** Having a nominated individual, team, or senior management member with the authority to progress the policy and any resulting actions is crucial for internal communication of your aims.

Finally, remember to set a date for reviewing your policy: perhaps on an annual timescale, or one in-line with your other organisational reviews. As your organisation develops, so too will your environmental sustainability concerns and actions, and the more visible and active your policy is, the more relevant and useful it will be.

For more information, example case studies and downloadable resources like this one, go to Creative Carbon's website at www.creativecarbonscotland.com.

*Please Note: This Guide has been adapted from the **Guide to Environmental Policies** published by **Creative Carbon Scotland** as part of its Green Arts Initiative. The information contained in this guide has been amended to suit an Irish context. The Green Arts Initiative in Ireland would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of Creative Carbon Scotland.*

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Building a stronger performing arts community in Ireland.