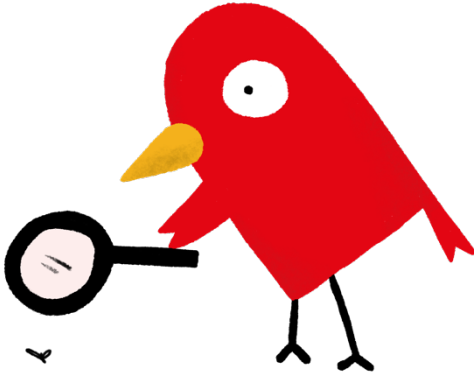


Baboró

International Arts Festival for Children



Learnings from LEAP

May 2023

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What is Baboró?

Baboró International Arts Festival for Children nurtures children's innate creativity and curiosity for the world around them through the creative arts. We do this by presenting an annual international festival in Galway city and county and through offering year round opportunities, including creative engagement in the classroom, outreach projects, and professional development supports for artists creating work for young audiences.

What is LEAP?

Baboró's LEAP is a community-building project and artist development programme for creative individuals from underrepresented, ethnically diverse communities and/or migrant backgrounds curious about creating work for young audiences. It is one branch of our overarching artist development programme, GROW. The pilot LEAP programme launched in 2022 and involved a four-day workshop series led by Moonfish Theatre, with additional facilitation from Maeve Stone and Mufutau Yusuf. The workshop series was followed by an optional bursary to be used for mentorship or a gap day, and a paid visit to the 2022 Baboró Festival. The 2022 participants were Alexandra Craciun, Fernanda Ferrari, Justyna Cwojdzńska, and Justin Anene.

LEAP's pilot programme was funded by the Arts Council's Capacity Building Award with further support from the Irish Research Council's New Foundations Scheme. The entire process was evaluated by Dr. Charlotte McIvor (Discipline of Drama and Theatre Studies, University of Galway) and her research team Jillian Kenny, Maia Purdue, Mikail Nimitz and Heidi Schoenenbergerr.

Why LEAP?

A gap exists between the diversity of our young audiences and that of the artists presenting work for them—LEAP was born from a need to eliminate that gap. Children deserve quality art that represents them, created by artists with whom they can relate. As a source of support for artists in Ireland creating work for children, we at Baboró realise our responsibility in ensuring our opportunities reach creatives of varying backgrounds, abilities, ethnicities, and identities, and acknowledge the need for us to break down barriers and actively seek and support artists who face disproportionate challenges. LEAP is Baboró's first artist development support programme that solely and explicitly supports artists from ethnically diverse/migrant backgrounds.

LEAP is a vital part of our mission to support artists creating work for young people, strengthening the sector with varied voices and beginning to rectify the discrepancy between representation in the communities we serve and representation on our stages.

Overall Learnings

1. Take your time and press pause if needed:

- Change the timeline if it means maintaining the value of the programme.
- Think through each action and its implications before making decisions.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions at any and every stage.

*** LEAP took about 18 months longer to develop than initially planned due to the Covid-19 pandemic, accommodating a team member's maternity leave, and ultimately pressing pause to adjust the programme design and ensure LEAP remained a valuable offer.**

2. Think deep, not wide:

- Be realistic about capacity and resources available to you, your organisation, and all those involved.
- Factor in time for *many* learnings and the subsequent adjustments.
- Frame the programme as part of a longer term process within your organisation and/or the sector (ie. you don't have to do it all right now). This work is hard and requires change from all aspects of society; as an arts organisation with limited resources, focusing on small-scale projects that are rich in value can be more impactful and sustainable than large-scale programmes.

*** Based on feedback from our Advisory Board, we significantly scaled-back LEAP to make it more realistic and thus more valuable to participants. This change re-focused the programme on artists' practice, removing plans for school workshops and a public sharing. We also changed who the programme was for, narrowing from a wide call to any artist from an underrepresented community to specifically those from ethnically diverse/migrant backgrounds.**

3. Consider the programme in context:

- How does it fit into your organisation? Does it clash with or build upon other projects and/or objectives? Is it sustainable?
- How does it fit into the wider sector? Are there similar programmes and if so, what are they doing similarly and what are they doing differently?
- How might the programme, or learnings from the process, continue within the organisation?

*** We found rolling out LEAP in tandem with creating our DEI Policy helped a lot; through LEAP, we could practically embody and trial the policy we were drafting while also incorporating learnings from LEAP into the policy.**

4. Expect blind spots:

- You will get things wrong (you're only human!)—acknowledge this, but don't be defeated by it.
- Take each moment of the process as an opportunity to learn. Then see if you are able to use these learnings to improve the programme/process at this time, or if you need to save the learning to apply next time (both are alright).
- Try to minimise blind spots by including diverse voices throughout the process. This could be an Advisory Board, consultants, etc. Ensure contributors are remunerated for their time.

*** We worked with two consultants during the process. Noeleen Hartigan, who was already working with us on our strategic development, supported the designing of LEAP and provided a wealth of research for us to use for reference. Trina Haldar of The Spark (UK) collaborated closely with us to develop an inclusive call out. We also met three times with our Advisory Board of diverse creatives throughout the development and call out process. All stakeholders were paid as either employee, consultant or arts worker.**

5. Clearly define the project lead:

- Define the project lead from the get-go. This person will be in charge of driving momentum and keeping track of action points.
- Make sure all stakeholders know who the project lead is.
- Think democratically by building a robust and multi-skilled core team to support the project lead; the lead won't be in charge of every aspect of the programme, but should be kept up-to-date and is responsible for keeping the ball rolling.
- Ultimately, the project lead has the final say.

6. Be gracious with yourself and others:

- This work is difficult, ever-changing, and requires a lot of nuance; there's no single 'right answer.'
- Be authentic, patient, honest, reflective, and embrace vulnerability.

Learnings from the call out process

1. Be conscious and precise in your language:

- Make sure you clearly define the words you use around diversity for yourself, your stakeholders and the artists you're trying to reach. Remember, the words you use are how artists will know whether or not the programme is for them—it's the first invitation, so should be clear and welcoming.
- Terminology is a sensitive area and changes from region to region and year to year. Seek advice from experts in the area, but also know that you'll never get everyone to 100% agree—language is an ever-changing landscape.
- The more clarity in your language, the more clarity in the programme objectives.

*** Ireland is often caught between UK and US terminology, so just be conscious about where the terminology you use comes from. For LEAP, we used mostly UK terms, but we had Americans on the team who also influenced the language.**

2. Make the call out dynamic on its own terms:

- Lead with the artistic offer and follow with the identity eligibility criteria; this prioritises applicants as artists first and foremost.
- Eligibility is only one aspect of the call out, though an important one. The design of the call out should reflect this, neither over- nor under-emphasising eligibility.
- Consider including a graphic to enhance the design.
- Have a named person whom applicants can contact for help.
- Allow flexibility in how to apply, accepting submissions in written, recorded, filmed, etc. formats.
- Be clear and specific in describing how to apply; give applicants direct questions to respond to in the call out.

3. Make the offer of your programme worth it:

- Make the offer worth the artists' time, preferably by paying them.
- Make sure the offer is valuable for their artistry and not reliant on their identity as underrepresented (ie. do not tokenise the artists).
- Offer long term benefits for the artist, if possible. This could be lasting relationships, some kind of follow-on investment from your organisation, etc.
- Offer additional support as much as possible. This may include having an access fund (see 4 below) that covers costs for child care, extra transport, interpreters, etc. and/or working with each individual to ensure they can take part in the programme.

*** On reflection, one LEAP participant pointed out that any call out where an aspect of identity is part of the eligibility criteria will inherently feel tokenising; it's then up to the call out to prove that the programme is valuable in its own right.**

4. Remember, everyone has more than just one identity:

- Be clear and specific about who your programme is for, but remember that we all have intersectional identities (eg. an artist may be both Black and use a wheelchair).
- Include an access fund to be used specifically for artists requiring additional support, regardless of who the opportunity is for. This is good practice for every programme, not just ones focused on DEI.

*** To calculate an ideal access fund, The Spark (UK) recommends taking 25% of the total programme budget (eg. If a programme costs €50k without an access fund, estimate access to be an additional €12,500, so the final total budget with access would be €62,500). This is a goal to strive for, but not realistic for most organisations right off the bat. Take time when creating your initial budget to consider how much you can set aside specifically for access costs.**

5. Plan for extra labour:

- Share the call out directly with diverse communities and through channels outside of your own organisation's usual communications. This might require finding and building relationships with other organisations that you've not previously connected with.
- Have a designated person to help applicants make their submission, then plan for the additional time this person will have to dedicate to helping applicants.

6. Be transparent about the selection process:

- As soon as you publish the call out (or as close to it as possible), be honest about how successful applicants will be selected and who will be selecting them.

*** On our website, we included an FAQ section with the LEAP call out that explained the 'how' and 'who' of the selection process.**

7. Collect demographic information as part of the application:

- For opportunities exclusively for diverse participants, clearly outline where applicants can state their identity, as relevant to the opportunity.
- For opportunities where identity is not a qualifying criterion, gathering *optional* and *anonymous* demographic data from applicants can reveal who you are reaching and who you aren't, and can help you more consciously and effectively strategise outreach opportunities in the future.

*** For LEAP, we did not explicitly ask applicants to state their ethnic/cultural identity, trying not to tokenise, but this sometimes made it challenging to determine applicants' eligibility.**

Learnings from the workshop itself

What went well:

1. Balance concrete skill-building with organic artistic exchange:

- Maintain a democratic, non-hierarchical structure in the room.
- Include practical teachings around freelance administration and producing work.

2. Make time to enter the workshop space each day:

- Have informal 'tea and chats' or some way to invite everyone into the room gently and cultivate organic conversation while getting to know each other.
- Start each workshop with a check in, giving each person in the room a chance to share how they feel that day and collectively prepare for the work at hand.

3. Offer a full-time residential experience

- Have participants and facilitators share occasional meals and stay in the same accommodation, as much as possible.
- Use your access fund to overcome barriers as much as possible and ensure all participants can fully engage in the full-time residential experience.

4. Share notes from the workshop:

- Let participants know at the beginning that facilitators will share exercises and techniques used in the workshops after the programme concludes. This keeps participants present in the room as they don't feel pressure to take notes during the workshops themselves.
- Encourage participants to use and adapt these notes for further development.

5. Everyone in the room must participate:

- If you have any additional people in the room other than facilitators and participants, have them participate as much as possible, particularly in the check ins and check outs. This maintains a safe and brave environment and keeps all those present equally vulnerable.

*** For LEAP, evaluators and Baboró's representative in the room all took part in almost all workshop exercises to ensure a cohesive ensemble throughout the process and avoid participants feeling observed.**

What we can improve in future:

1. Include more than 4 workshop days

- In 4 days, you can get to know each other and establish a feeling of ensemble, but you don't have much time to work on individual practice and exchange.

2. Include more than 4 participants

- Keep participants numbers small to maintain intimacy and ensure everyone can gain each other's trust swiftly, but make sure the group is big enough to optimise creative exchange and build a real sense of community.

3. Involve unsuccessful applicants:

- Consider how you might still be able to offer something of value to the remaining applicants.
- Think about how unsuccessful applicants are included in your organisational community.

4. Plan follow-up meetings:

- Create structured ways for the cohort of participants to meet up again in order to support each other and track ongoing development.
- You may plan an initial follow-up, then encourage the participants to take it into their own hands or keep in touch more informally.
- The point is to show the relationships you've built are of value and sustainable.

Additional Resources

If you want to learn more about any of these learnings, LEAP, or Baboró's strategic DEI work, take a look at these additional resources:

- The full LEAP evaluation report which will be available on [Baboro.ie](https://www.baboro.ie) from June 2023
- [This podcast](#) with three of LEAP's 2022 participants and selected facilitators and members of the research team, presented as part of the 2022 Baboró Festival Delegate Programme
- Baboró's first Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy on [Baboro.ie](https://www.baboro.ie)
- Baboró's complete five-year Strategy on [Baboro.ie](https://www.baboro.ie)