



FESTIVALS
Malta



Strategy 2026–2031



Acknowledgements

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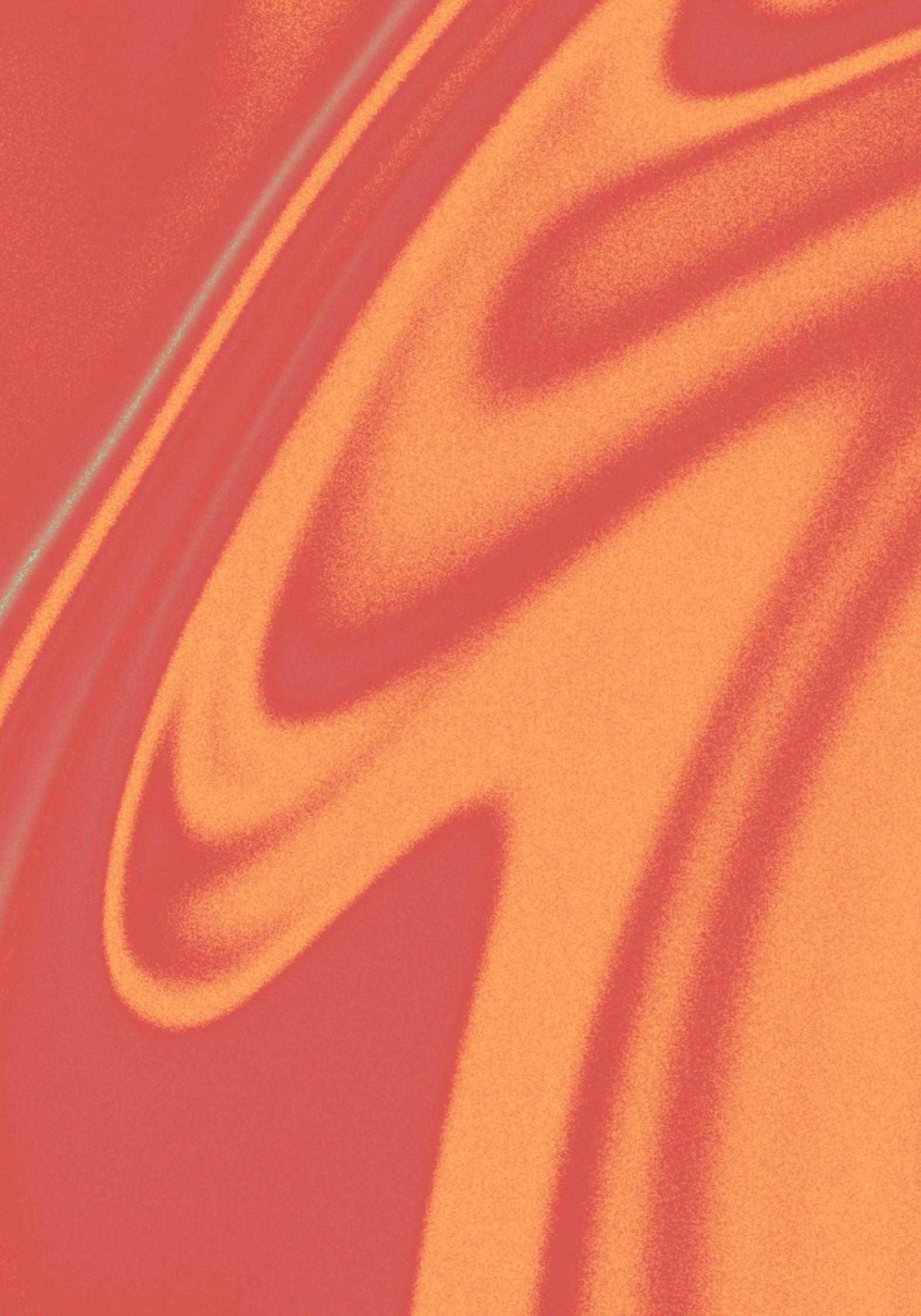
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Developed in collaboration with:





A Message from the Chairman

Aaron Zahra

Festivals Malta embarks on the next five years with a strategy designed to respond to the needs of the community, the evolving cultural landscape, and opportunities for sustainable growth. Developed in collaboration with ARC Research & Consultancy, this strategy reflects a comprehensive process that combines research with stakeholder engagement.

The development of this strategy brought together diverse perspectives through policy reviews, internal and external consultations, audience research, and dialogue with various European festival networks. This collaborative approach ensured that the Festivals Malta strategy is grounded in evidence, reflective by collective insight, and responsive to both local and international cultural contexts.

Through this process, the strategy sets out a shared ambition for the five years ahead, one that strengthens cultural impact, fosters collaboration, and nurtures artistic talent across Malta's creative sectors. It also positions Festivals Malta to navigate emerging challenges, embrace innovation, and secure a sustainable future for the country's vibrant festival ecosystem.

As Festivals Malta looks toward the next five years and beyond, this strategy serves as both a guide and a commitment, outlining how the agency will continue to cultivate creativity, strengthen communities, and sustain Malta's cultural legacy for generations to come.

A Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Frans Agius

Festivals Malta will be moving to the next five years of operation with a clear commitment to transforming vision into action. This strategy, primarily defines how our mission and values will be translated into practice by aligning our artistic, organisational, and operational priorities to strengthen the quality of Festivals Malta's work, in the current digital developments.

Festivals Malta's mission is rooted in four guiding pillars, which establish the framework through which the agency plans, implements, and evaluates all areas of operation; from artistic programming and community engagement, to professional development and sectoral growth.

The strategy reaffirms the principles that guide Festivals Malta's decisions, in turn defining it as a resilient and vibrant organisation. It strengthens the agency's commitment to excellence, innovation, and collaboration. These principles shape how Festivals Malta plans, creates, and connects, ensuring that every operational aspect reflects a shared sense of purpose and responsibility toward the cultural communities the agency serves.

Operationally, this strategy equips Festivals Malta with the mechanisms needed to achieve meaningful and measurable progress. It strengthens planning and evaluation frameworks, embeds clear lines of collaboration across internal teams and Artistic Directors, and supports data collection and analysis as key tools for learning and improvement. These systems, together with the contemporary digital tools, will enable us to operate efficiently by ensuring that our festivals continue to evolve in line with Malta's cultural ecosystem.

By linking the mission, vision, and values presented in this strategy to a structured, actionable plan, Festivals Malta is positioned to not only deliver cultural excellence, but to also build the foundations for sustained future growth and innovation.

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List of Abbreviations

AD	Artistic Director
DMC	Destination Management Company
FM	Festivals Malta
KA	Key Action
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PCO	Public Cultural Organisation
SO	Strategic Objective

Introduction: An Overview of the Organisation



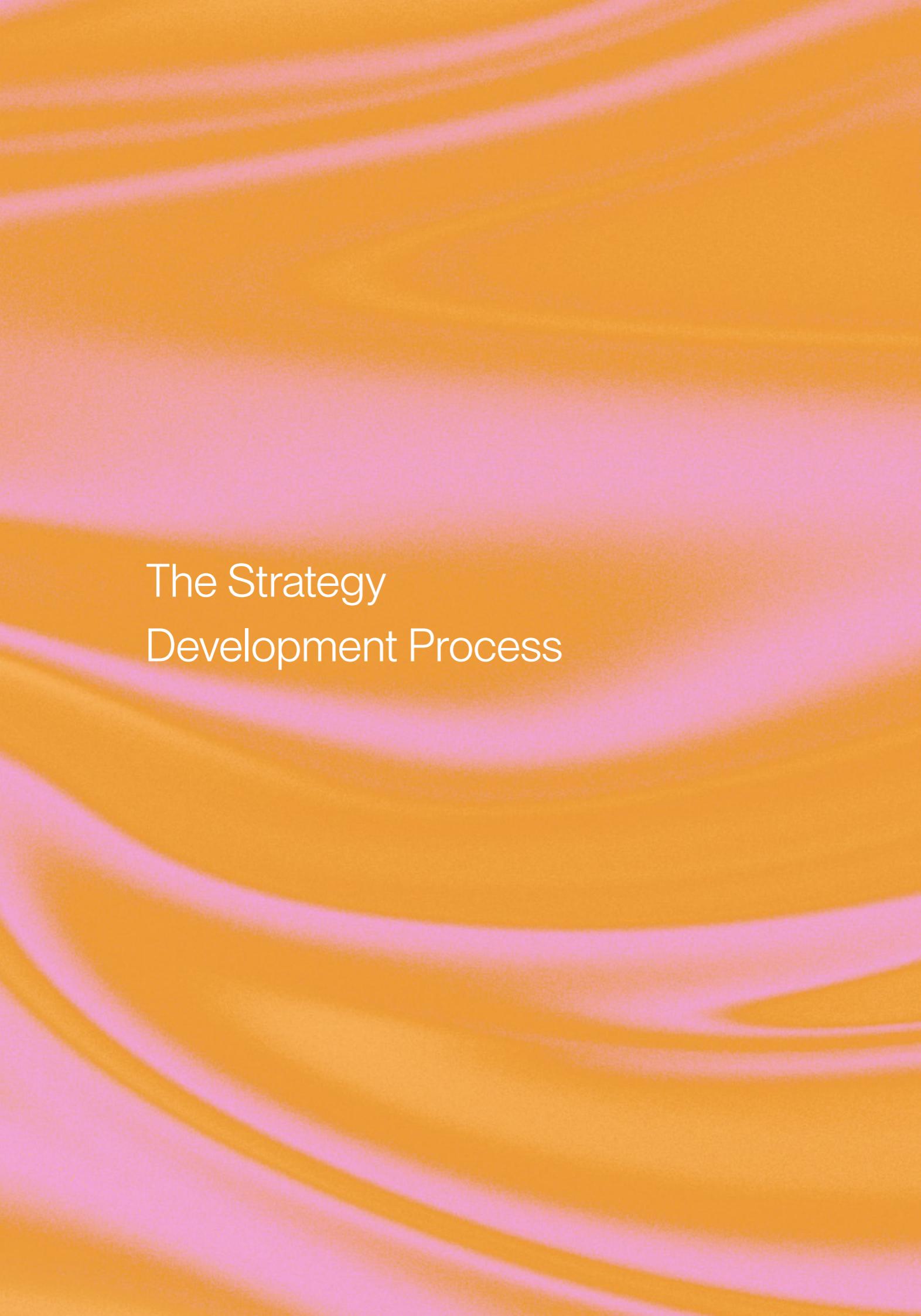
Photo by Stephen Buhagiar

Festivals Malta is the national government body dedicated to the nurturing and growth of festivals and cultural events in Malta and Gozo.

Since its establishment in 2017, Festivals Malta has built a diverse portfolio of 11 festivals, each with its own character, audience, and artistic priorities, as well as overseeing 5 national events. This multiplicity is a defining feature of this Public Cultural Organisation. From large-scale national events to smaller, site-specific or community-focused festivals, the portfolio spans a wide spectrum of work, reflecting the richness, diversity, and creativity of the local cultural & creative sectors.

This plurality enables Festivals Malta to provide platforms for a broad range of artistic expression, showcase local talent, celebrate and reinterpret cultural traditions, and engage audiences and communities in meaningful and participatory ways. At the same time, the diversity of festivals within the portfolio adds inherent complexity. Each festival engages its own team, stakeholders, artists, and audiences, requiring tailored operational approaches while still aligning with shared organisational objectives, resources, and standards.

The multiplicity of Festivals Malta's portfolio underscores the need for a clear, unified vision to guide decision-making, coordination, communication, and long-term strategy across all its activities. This document provides that vision, offering a framework that ensures coherence, maximises impact, and strengthens the organisation's role as a catalyst to cultivate creativity, collaboration, and cultural excellence across Malta and Gozo, as well as the organisation's international collaborations.



The Strategy Development Process

The strategy development process was designed and delivered by an international team of researchers and advisors, bringing together expertise in cultural policy, organisational strategy, and festival management. A customised process was created to respond to the organisation's specific operational context and ambitions. Conducted over an eight-month period (January–September 2025), the process engaged with multiple stakeholders, ensuring that the resulting strategy reflects a broad and inclusive range of perspectives. The insights generated through this process formed the foundation for the strategy development process, directly shaping the key themes and strategic objectives that define it.

Guiding Principles:

01

Participation

A broad range of stakeholders, both internal and external to the organisation, were consulted in order to bring together and reconcile diverse perspectives from within and outside Festivals Malta (FM), revealing viewpoints from different, and at times disconnected areas of the cultural ecosystem.

02

Responsiveness

The process was designed to reflect the perceived needs and ambitions of FM's operators and stakeholders, while also aligning with the broader policy and strategic landscape within which the organisation operates.

03

Ownership

The focus extended beyond broad strategic goals to address micro-level challenges and opportunities that impact day-to-day operations. The aim was to produce a strategy that is actionable, enabling individuals and teams within FM to embrace and implement the strategy by translating ambitions into structured actions.

The Approach:

Desk Research

Review of regional, national, and European policy documents, academic literature, and cultural policy studies to situate the strategy within its broader operational context and identify emerging trends.

Internal Interviews and Focus Groups

Interviews with FM teams and their Artistic Directors (ADs), alongside inter-team focus groups, to assess their understanding of the organisation's mission, vision, and values, examine operational practices, and identify the organisation's strengths and areas for improvement.

External Focus Groups

Engagement with key stakeholders such as Public Cultural Organisations (PCOs), governmental agencies, regional stakeholders, educational institutions, artists, Destination Management Companies (DMCs), and other representatives of the cultural and creative ecology. Discussions assessed relationships with FM, perceptions of its role, and opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration.

Audience Research

Distribution of a digital questionnaire to festival attendees with the aim of gathering preliminary insights on their perceptions of FM as an umbrella organisation, their existing relationships with the festivals it organises, and their experiences of corresponding events.

Open Online Talk with European Umbrella Festival Organisations

A moderated discussion featuring representatives from Berliner Festspiele, Festival City Adelaide, Festivals Edinburgh, and Rotterdam Festivals, invited to share their perspectives and experiences in relation to key transversal themes and challenges. The session was open to FM teams, PCOs, and relevant organisations, facilitating cross-pollination between local and international perspectives and generating actionable insights adaptable to FM's context.

Fieldwork Research

On-site observations at FM festivals and at the organisation's headquarters. This provided first-hand insights into how FM functions internally and externally, from day-to-day operations to public-facing events.

Internal Strategy & Implementation Workshops

Two workshop sessions with FM teams and ADs provided a platform to review the first draft of the strategy, familiarise participants with the strategic proposals, and invite feedback, questions, and critiques. The sessions enabled participants to articulate priorities, needs, and practical ambitions for implementation.

Participants & Perspectives:

01 Festivals Malta: Teams & ADs;

02 External Stakeholders: including Arts Council Malta, the Malta Tourism Authority, Heritage Malta, the Directorate for Local Government, Regional Councils across Malta and Gozo, and various PCOs;

03 Independent producers and practitioners, DMCs, cultural venues, and educational institutions;

04 Festival-goers;

05 Representatives from Berliner Festspiele, Festival City Adelaide, Festivals Edinburgh, and Rotterdam Festivals.

Focus of Inquiry:

01 FM's Mission, Vision & Values

02 Challenges and Opportunities

03 Aspirations and Expectations

04 Contentions & Suggestions for Change



Our Mission, Vision & Values

Mission

Festivals Malta (FM) curates, produces, and supports a diverse portfolio of festivals that celebrate artistic excellence and cultural diversity. Rooted in democratic principles and driven by sustainable and creative ambition, it fosters cross-sectoral collaboration, empowers artistic expression, and contributes to the Maltese Islands' cultural, social, and economic wellbeing.

Vision

To cultivate a festival ecosystem in the Maltese Islands that enhances quality of life, nurtures creativity and wellbeing, and connects communities locally and internationally through the shared experience of culture.

FM's mission and vision are elaborated in four thematic pillars, each representing a core domain of focus that guides the organisation's growth, decision-making, and impact. These pillars shall form the foundation of its strategy for the next five years:

Responsiveness to Audiences & Communities

To design festivals and cultural events that are inclusive, accessible, and attentive to the needs, values, challenges, and aspirations of diverse audiences and local communities.

Symbiosis & Collaboration

To foster strong, transparent, and mutually beneficial relationships between artists, cultural organisations, public bodies, and the wider community to enhance creativity, learning, and shared ownership of cultural experiences.

Plasticity & Risk-Taking

To encourage experimentation, innovation, and creative risk in festival programming and operational practice, enabling artists and teams to explore new formats, ideas, and approaches.

Investing in the Local Cultural & Creative Sectors

To support the development of Malta's cultural ecosystem through training, professional growth, infrastructure, and platforms that strengthen local artists, producers, and creative enterprises.

Values

Festivals Malta's work is guided by a set of values that shape its decisions, practices, and relationships. These values define the social contract FM upholds with the diverse communities it seeks to engage, not only as a cultural organiser, but also as a civic actor fostering inclusive dialogue and broad participation in cultural life. Within this strategy, they form the foundation for FM's strategic objectives, driving the organisation's sustainable growth.

Excellence-Driven

FM is committed to the highest standards of creativity, expression, and cultural production. Its commitment to excellence is not only about refining and championing artistic practice but also about identifying the shortcomings of existing practices and pursuing alternatives that may enable more meaningful, resonant, and accessible experiences for diverse communities.

Forward-Looking

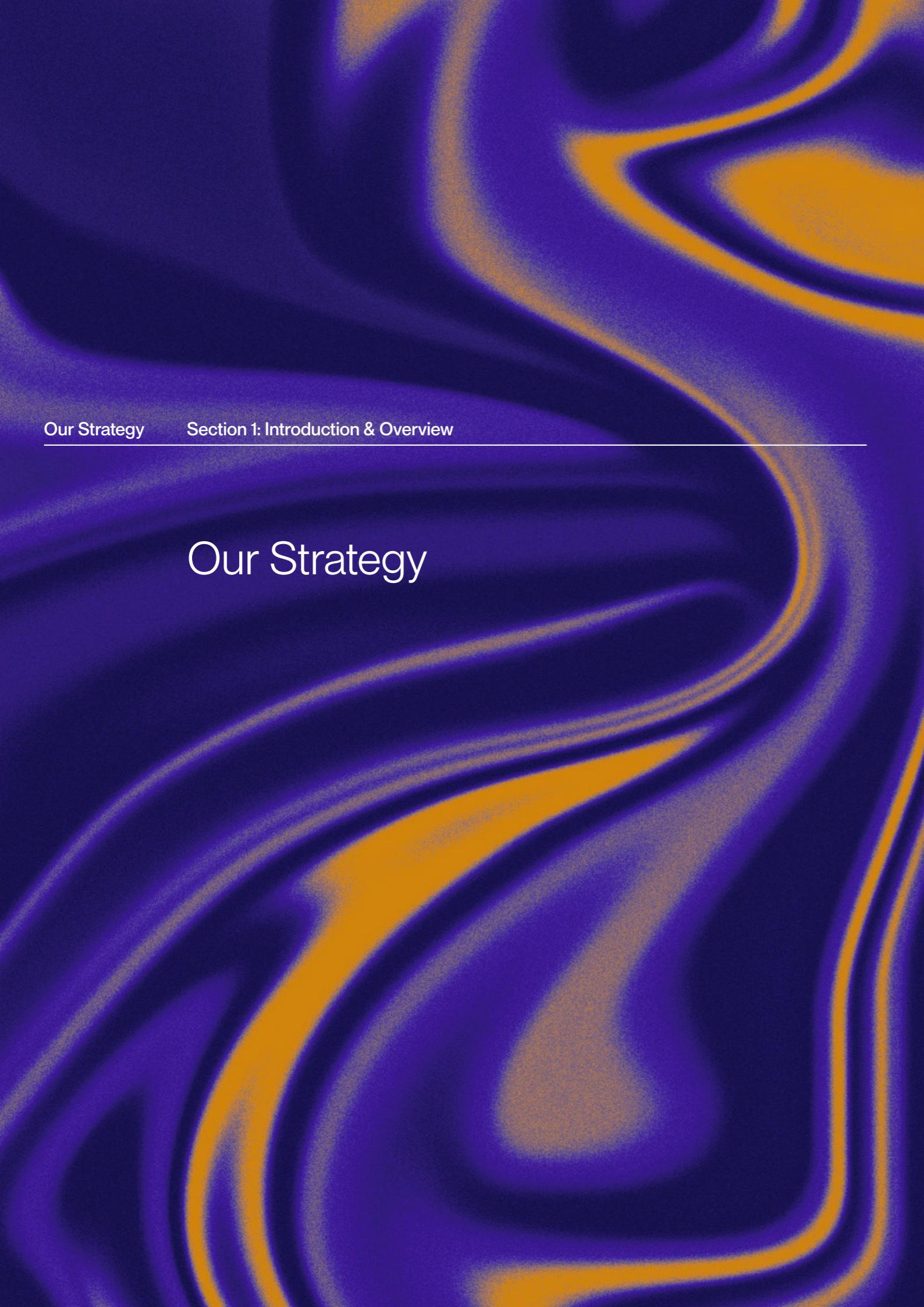
FM works with an eye to the future, shaping a cultural ecosystem that is resilient, relevant, and sustainable. This means embedding sustainability across all aspects of festival-making, from audience engagement and artistic programming to logistics and material sourcing. Being forward-looking also entails embracing open innovation as a core dimension of sustainable practice. This means exploring new ways of working responsibly and inclusively, testing alternatives, and reimagining how culture is accessed, shared, and valued. By doing so, FM not only safeguards its role in Malta's cultural legacy but continually renews it, positioning itself as dynamic, evolving, and internationally connected.

Data-Informed

FM grounds its decisions in an understanding of how its work impacts those it engages with, from artists to audiences, partners, and stakeholders. Data serves as a vital compass in this process, enabling dialogue and ensuring that responses are receptive, reflective, and forward-thinking.

Democratic

FM believes that culture is a shared, collective space, where multiple voices, perspectives, and identities are not only acknowledged but actively included. Its commitment to democracy means valuing openness, dialogue, and transparency in how decisions are made and how culture is created and experienced. FM strives to champion performative diversity, supporting artistic practices that reflect different communities and lived experiences, and ensuring that festivals remain spaces where society can encounter itself in its plurality.



Our Strategy

The matrix below organises Festivals Malta's strategy around the four thematic pillars which form the foundation of the organisation's mission and vision, and represent priority areas for strategic change. Each theme builds on existing strengths and practices while also responding to ongoing challenges, sectoral shifts, and emerging opportunities. Within each theme, the matrix sets out Strategic Objectives (SOs) that define the organisation's aims and articulate how FM seeks to achieve meaningful and sustainable change. Each thematic pillar is defined further in Section 2, where the SOs are elaborated by recommended Key Actions (KAs): concrete, actionable steps that drive implementation and help translate strategic ambitions into practice.

Thematic Pillar 1

**Responsiveness
to Audiences
& Communities**

SO1

**Understanding
Audiences**

Develop a systemic and nuanced understanding of audience behaviours, needs, and barriers to participation, particularly among underrepresented communities.

SO2

**Pursuing
Audience-Centred
Decision Making**

Establish an audience development plan grounded in research, consultation, and cultural equity, ensuring that audiences shape, inform, and see themselves in the festivals presented by FM.

SO3

**Placing the Right to
Culture at the Core
of Festival-Making**

Ensure that programming, planning, and the use of public spaces reflect the priorities, needs, and identities of diverse local communities.

SO4

**Harnessing Culture
for Wellbeing**

Harness the transformative role of culture in enhancing individual and collective wellbeing, fostering social cohesion, and promoting mental and emotional resilience through festival programming and engagement.

SO5

**Decentralising
Cultural Production**

Expand festivals across Malta and Gozo's localities through site-responsive, community-engaged programming in order to promote regional cultural development and cultural accessibility.

Thematic Pillar 2

**Symbiosis
& Collaboration**

SO6

**Broadening
Cross-Sectoral
Alliances**

Enhance collaboration with educational institutions, other governmental organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and private entities to enable the reciprocal sharing of expertise, infrastructure, and experience, enhancing the sectors' collective capacity and generating mutual value.

SO7

**Strengthening
International Synergies**

Deepen international collaborations to foster the exchange of expertise, enable joint innovation, and support the internationalisation of Malta's festivals sector by positioning FM as a proactive partner in transnational cultural networks and a contributor to shared global cultural goals and values.

SO8

**Deepening Regional
and Local Collaboration**

Strengthen partnerships with regional and local councils to better understand localised community needs and establish stronger alignment with FM's programming and operations.

SO9

**Embracing
Collaboration
as Brand Identity**

Position collaboration as a core value and visible practice within FM's brand identity, by publicising partnerships and co-created projects, and championing joint contributions in programming, training, and audience engagement.

Thematic Pillar 3

**Plasticity
& Risk-Taking**

SO10

**Incentivising Artistic
Experimentation**

Preserve the artistic autonomy of ADs while establishing organisational support structures that enable and incentivise experimentation in artistic programming, encouraging exploration, risk, and collaborative dialogue within festivals-making.

SO11

**Facilitating Operational
Innovation**

Drive organisational innovation by defining, piloting and evaluating team-specific practices and operational models that may enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and environmental sustainability of the organisation's day-to-day practices.

Thematic Pillar 4

**Investing in the
Local Cultural &
Creative Sectors**

SO12

**Facilitating
Professionalisation**

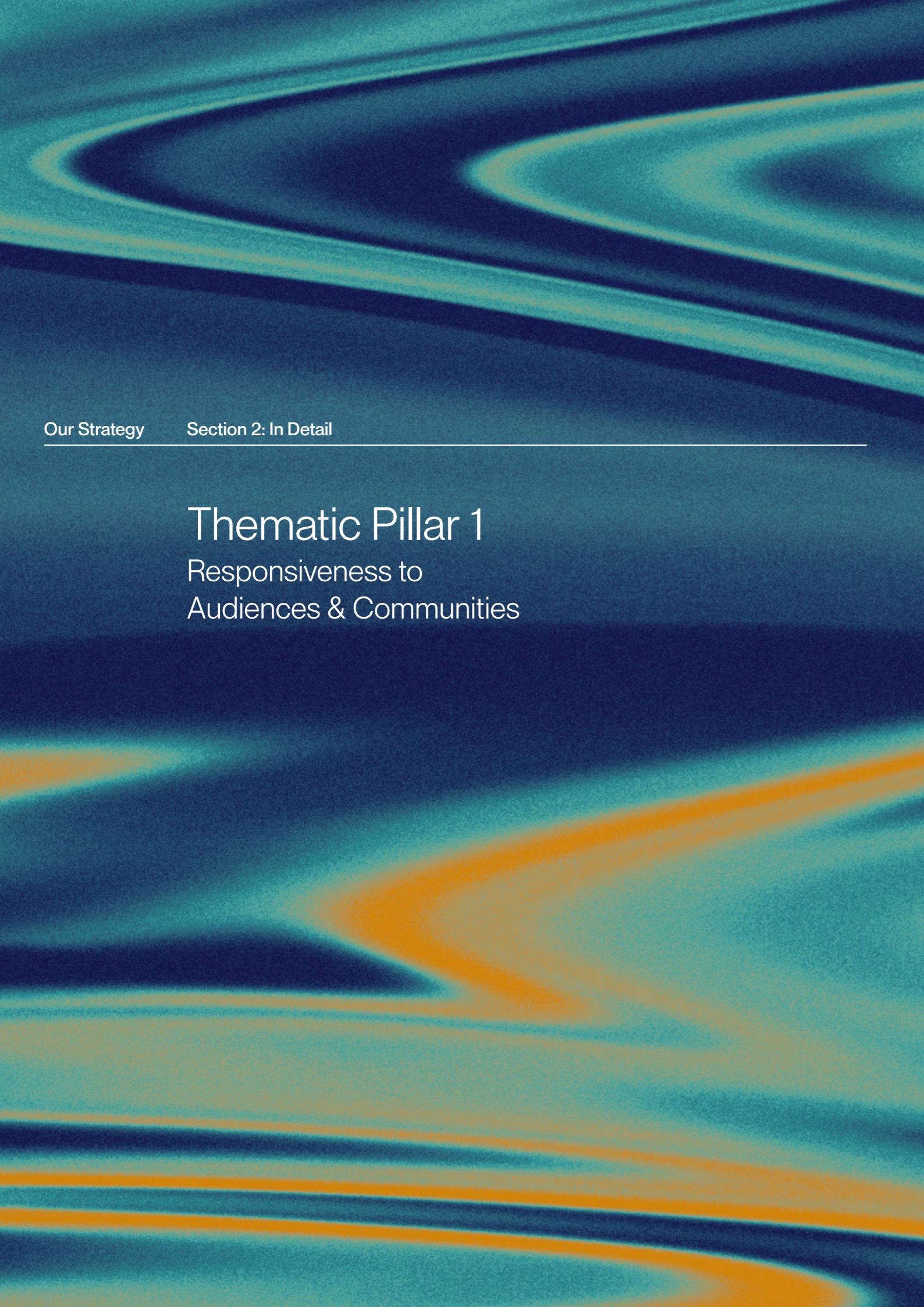
Invest in the professionalisation of our arts festivals through strengthened collaborations with educational institutions and initiatives that support cultural leadership, visibility, mentorship, and skills development.

SO13

**Leading Sectoral
Growth**

Strengthen the capacity of the festivals ecosystem through targeted investment, data-led planning, and support structures that enable its sustainable growth and prosperity.

**An Overview
of the Strategy**



Festivals Malta operates at the intersection between cultural production, consumption, and civic engagement. Underpinned by a responsibility to uphold civic society's right to culture, FM places the audiences and communities it serves at the heart of its mission. A sustainable relationship with audiences extends beyond transactional exchanges, seeking not only to cater to cultural consumers but also to nurture deeper, reciprocal connections and relationships that lead to sustained engagement and growth. This requires a responsiveness to the communities FM seeks to engage, recognising the social, cultural, and economic variables that influence the strength and sustainability of such engagement.

Why does this theme matter to FM?

Our Strategy Section 2: In Detail

Thematic Pillar 1

Responsiveness to Audiences & Communities

Changing Audiences
& Patterns of Consumption

Shifts in demographics, audience expectations, and cultural engagement patterns, alongside phenomena such as cultural fatigue, require fresh strategies for retention and growth.

International Appeal

Several FM festivals currently draw a larger proportion of international visitors than local attendees. While this affirms Malta's cultural brand internationally, strengthening local engagement is essential for building resilient, long-term audience relationships.

Changes in Urban Design
& the Accessibility of
Cultural Spaces

Urban redevelopment has both physically and symbolically distanced some communities from key cultural spaces.

Cultural Equity &
Representation

Culture is a driver of inclusion, wellbeing, and community cohesion. FM must lead by example, ensuring its programming and operations reflect diverse social realities and actively remove barriers to participation. This requires enabling those previously absent to engage with FM's cultural offerings and ensuring its festivals and programmes are open to the widest possible public. Central to this is accessibility, not only physical, sensory, and cognitive, but also programmatic, through the careful design of content, formats, and schedules that accommodate diverse audiences. Achieving this demands a strategic commitment to understanding who is engaging, who is not, and why; addressing both structural and perceptual barriers; and implementing measures that expand FM's reach to broader and more diverse communities.

Overview

Thematic Pillar 1

Responsiveness to Audiences & Communities

SO1	<u>Understanding Audiences</u>	1.1 Research & Consultation	1.2 Data Collection and Data Literacy	1.3 Knowledge Sharing
SO2	<u>Pursuing Audience-Centred Decision Making</u>	2.1 Strategic Alignment	2.2 Responsive Practice	
SO3	<u>Placing the Right to Culture at the Core of Festival-Making</u>	3.1 Cultural Rights & Access	3.2 Reciprocal Engagement	3.3 Citizen Participation
SO4	<u>Harnessing Culture for Wellbeing</u>	4.1 Partnerships in Wellbeing	4.2 Wellbeing-Oriented Programming	4.3 Impact Evaluation
SO5	<u>Decentralising Cultural Production</u>	5.1 Localised Events & Touring Models	5.2 Cultural Infrastructure & Identities	

Strategic Objectives & Key Actions

SO1 Understanding Audiences

Key Actions		
Develop a systemic and nuanced understanding of audience behaviours, needs, and barriers to participation, particularly among underrepresented communities.	1.1 Research & Consultation	Engage in research and consultation with target groups and experts to understand access needs and cultural habits, particularly relating to age, disability, neurodiversity, and socio-economic background.
	1.2 Data Collection and Data Literacy	Create internal mechanisms for capturing audience metrics, experiences, and perceptions through onsite data collection points across all festivals.
	1.3 Knowledge Sharing	Publish annual reports on audience insights to inform sector-wide planning, partnerships, and learning processes, whilst ensuring that this data is presented in a clear, user-friendly format and made readily accessible to all FM team members.

SO2 Pursuing Audience-Centred Decision Making

Key Actions		
Establish an audience development plan grounded in research, consultation, and cultural equity, ensuring that audiences shape, inform, and see themselves in the festivals presented by FM.	2.1 Strategic Alignment	Guide decision-making in all facets of festival-making by audience-related insights and core questions relating to relevance, resonance, and relationships (such as: Which communities are being targeted? What are their needs and how do these align with the needs of artists and the organisation's overarching vision?).
	2.2 Responsive Practice	Incorporate audience perspectives into all aspects of festival design, pursuing inclusion, accessibility, and authenticity across all festival events.

SO3 Placing the Right to Culture at the Core of Festival-Making

Key Actions		
Ensure that programming, planning, and the use of public spaces reflect the priorities, needs, and identities of diverse local communities.	3.1 Cultural Rights & Access	Assess and address space-related barriers to cultural participation.
	3.2 Reciprocal Engagement	Allow community needs and priorities to inform choices around programming, scheduling, and the choice of space, supporting a more reciprocal and responsive model of festival development.
	3.3 Citizen Participation	Support citizens' right to cultural expression by creating space for co-creation and community-specific narratives within festival programming.

SO4 Harnessing a Culture for Wellbeing

Key Actions		
Harness the transformative role of culture in enhancing individual and collective wellbeing, fostering social cohesion, and promoting mental and emotional resilience through festival programming and engagement.	4.1 Partnerships in Wellbeing	Collaborate with health, social care, and community organisations to integrate cultural participation and wellbeing initiatives.
	4.2 Wellbeing-Oriented Programming	Curate and design events that actively support mental, emotional, and social wellbeing, including participatory, reflective, and community-building activities.
	4.3 Impact Evaluation	Develop tools to measure the impact of FM's programmes, using findings to refine future strategies and contribute to sector-wide knowledge on culture and wellbeing.

SO5 Decentralising Cultural Production

Key Actions		
Expand festivals across Malta and Gozo's localities through site-responsive, community-engaged programming in order to promote regional cultural development and cultural accessibility.	5.1 Localised Events & Touring Models	Reimagine and adapt festival formats to take place across different localities, through mobile or recontextualised programming adapted to each region's needs and characteristics.
	5.2 Cultural Infrastructure & Identities	Use the natural and built environment as inspiration for site-responsive programming, enriching local cultural profiles and reinforcing regional identities.

FM operates within a wider cultural ecosystem, where its success is interdependent with that of other organisations, communities, and sectors. Symbiosis in this context refers to the capacity to both recognise and harness the knowledge, expertise, and opportunities that exist beyond FM, while also contributing its own resources and insights for wider benefits. Collaboration is not only an artistic or operational choice. It is a strategic necessity for addressing cross-cutting challenges such as training gaps, infrastructure deficits, and accessibility barriers. FM's teams and ADs already maintain a broad network of partnerships with PCOs, educational institutions, NGOs, and other government agencies. The next step is to strengthen the institutional structures that sustain these relationships, ensuring they are scalable, strategically aligned, and mutually beneficial.

Why does this theme matter to FM?

[Our Strategy](#) [Section 2: In Detail](#)

Thematic Pillar 2

Symbiosis & Collaboration

Sustainability

As the Cultural and Creative Sectors grow, there is an increasing need for efficient use of spaces, infrastructure, and services. Collaboration enables shared solutions that reduce duplication and support long-term sectoral sustainability.

Strengthening Organisational Capacities

Strategic partnerships allow FM to share responsibilities, resources, and expertise, strengthening its internal capacity to focus on core priorities while increasing impact.

Overview

Thematic Pillar 2

Symbiosis & Collaboration

SO6 Map Existing and Potential Partnerships

6.1 Data Collection and Data Literacy	6.2 Resource Sharing	6.3 Knowledge Exchange
6.4 Co-Created Projects		

SO7 Strengthening International Synergies

7.1 Map Existing and Potential Partnerships	7.2 Global Exchange	7.3 Joint Innovation
7.4 Sectoral Internationalisation		

SO8 Deepening Regional and Local Collaboration

8.1 Community-Centred Planning

SO9 Embracing Collaboration as Brand Identity

9.1 Internal Portfolio Collaboration	9.2 Visibility of Practice
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Strategic Objectives & Key Actions

SO6 Broadening Cross-Sectoral Alliances

Enhance collaboration with educational institutions, other governmental organisations, NGOs, and private entities to enable the reciprocal sharing of expertise, infrastructure, and experience, enhancing the sectors' collective capacity and generating mutual value.

Key Actions		
6.1 Map Existing and Potential Partnerships	Create and maintain a detailed register of current and prospective partners, noting their areas of expertise, available resources, and alignment with FM's strategic objectives to identify gaps, opportunities, and priority relationships.	
6.2 Resource Sharing	Develop formal agreements that enable the equitable sharing of expertise, knowledge, venues, equipment, technical services, and logistical support, ensuring cost-effectiveness and mutual benefit.	
6.3 Knowledge Exchange	Consult key partners on areas of strategic priority that intersect with their existing expertise, leveraging their knowledge while creating opportunities for mutual benefit.	
6.4 Co-Created Projects	Initiate pilot collaborations with partners (e.g. joint workshops, shared training, or co-produced events) to put shared expertise and resources into practice.	

SO7 Strengthening International Synergies

Deepen international collaborations to foster the exchange of expertise, enable joint innovation, and support the internationalisation of Malta's festivals sector by positioning FM as a proactive partner in transnational cultural networks and a contributor to shared global cultural goals and values.

Key Actions		
7.1 Map Existing and Potential Partnerships	Create and maintain a register of existing and potential international collaborators, detailing their expertise, resources, and strategic alignment, to identify gaps, opportunities, and priority relationships that can strengthen FM's global engagement.	
7.2 Global Exchange	Position FM as a proactive partner in international networks through active participation and the internal sharing of insights to strengthen organisational and shared learning, and facilitate continued co-creation with global peers.	
7.3 Joint Innovation	Participate in and initiate transnational projects that explore new artistic and operational models.	
7.4 Sectoral Internationalisation	Use international collaborations to build capacity within the Maltese sector, while showcasing its work on the global stage.	

SO8 Deepening Regional and Local Collaboration

Key Actions		
Strengthen partnerships with regional and local councils to better understand localised community needs and establish stronger alignment with FM's programming and operations.	8.1 Community-Centred Planning	Engage local councils and community members as knowledge holders and co-creators in festival planning, leveraging their insights into community needs, volunteer networks, and space availability.

SO9 Embracing Collaboration as Brand Identity

Key Actions		
Position collaboration as a core value and visible practice within Festivals Malta's brand identity, by publicising partnerships and co-created projects, and championing joint contributions in programming, training, and audience engagement.	9.1 Internal Portfolio Collaboration	Develop and strengthen structures that facilitate collaboration across FM's portfolio of festivals, enabling teams to share knowledge, coordinate programming, and leverage collective resources effectively.
	9.2 Visibility of Practice	Publicise collaborative processes and outcomes in marketing and communication strategies to emphasise symbiosis as central to FM's ethos.

Thematic Pillar 3

Plasticity & Risk-Taking

Plasticity and risk-taking combine a willingness to experiment with the resilience to integrate change in sustainable ways. This theme centres around the perceived importance for the creative and cultural ecosystem to adapt flexibly to evolving sectoral, technological, and community needs, while maintaining a clear sense of identity and long-term vision. This entails both operational agility as well as artistic openness: reshaping structures, processes, and programmes in response to new challenges and opportunities, and embracing practices whose outcomes may be uncertain but have the potential to deliver significant cultural, social, or organisational value. Importantly, this approach is not limited to the organisation or the immediate sectoral boundaries within which it operates. It also sets the stage for an open exchange of knowledge and ideas with other sectors, fostering cross-sectoral collaboration and development.

Why does this theme matter to FM?

Global Shifts in Cultural Production

Changes in audience behaviour, production methods, and funding structures worldwide demand plasticity and create opportunities for FM to act as a local pioneer in adaptation, contributing to sectoral resilience and relevance.

Sustainable Growth

Encouraging calculated experimentation strengthens FM's ability to respond to emerging challenges, evolving audience needs, and opportunities for long-term development.

A Foundation for Excellence

Flexibility and informed risk-taking are essential for sustaining and enhancing the quality of cultural production, ensuring FM's continued evolution and transformation.

Sectoral Needs

In Malta's relatively small artistic ecosystem, FM is uniquely positioned to incentivise artistic risk-taking and provide platforms for experimentation.

Operational Complexity

FM's diverse festival portfolio requires agility. Each festival has its own rhythm, scale, and audience, demanding tailored and responsive operational practices that evolve alongside the organisation's ambitions.

Technological Developments

Emerging technologies, particularly in artificial intelligence, open new possibilities for programming, production, marketing, and accessibility. Leading the sector in embracing these tools supports FM's ability to remain relevant and innovative.

Overview

Thematic Pillar 3

Plasticity & Risk-Taking

SO10 Incentivising Artistic Experimentation

10.1 Incentives 10.2 Dialogue & Critique 10.3 Knowledge Sharing

SO11 Facilitating Operational Innovation

11.1 International Models 11.2 Environmental Sustainability 11.3 Piloting, Testing & Evaluation

11.4 Knowledge & Practice Exchange

Strategic Objectives & Key Actions

SO10 Incentivising Artistic Experimentation

Key Actions		
Preserve the artistic autonomy of ADs while establishing organisational support structures that enable and incentivise experimentation in artistic programming, encouraging exploration, risk, and collaborative dialogue within festivals-making.	10.1 Incentives	Introduce organisational initiatives such as calls, projects, and commissions that prioritise experimental work, encourage risk-taking, and provide platforms for artists to trial new formats or concepts within FM festivals.
	10.2 Dialogue & Critique	Facilitate structured opportunities for reflection and critique among artists, audiences, and FM team members to evaluate programmed work and inform future innovation.
	10.3 Knowledge Sharing	Implement a framework to document, evaluate, and disseminate innovative practices, ensuring that insights gained through experimentation are shared across the sector.

SO11 Facilitating Operational Innovation

Key Actions		
Drive organisational innovation by defining, piloting and evaluating team-specific practices and operational models that may enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and environmental sustainability of the organisation's day-to-day practices.	11.1 International Models	Explore international practices and locally relevant models for festival format and delivery, identifying adaptable approaches that align with Malta's cultural, geographic, and social context.
	11.2 Environmental Sustainability	Promote environmentally sustainable innovation in festival-making through experimentation with greener production methods, energy use, mobility models, and materials sourcing.
	11.3 Piloting, Testing & Evaluation	Establish internal mechanisms to pilot and evaluate operational innovations within festival teams, enabling successful solutions to be scaled up and transferred from one festival to others across FM's portfolio.
	11.4 Knowledge & Practice Exchange	Facilitate structured exchanges of practices and insights across FM teams and with external organisations, both locally and internationally, to share lessons learned, strengthen capacity, and foster a culture of continuous operational innovation.



Thematic Pillar 4

Investing in the Local Cultural and Creative Sectors

FM is an active driver of Malta's creative economy. Through its work, the organisation generates employment, supports education and professional development, invests in artistic practice, and strengthens artistic communities. The way FM allocates its resources has a direct and shaping impact on the sector, influencing both immediate opportunities for employment and cultural production, as well as their long-term sustainability. Therefore, investment should not only respond to the evolving needs of the sectors it serves but also act as a guiding force to ensure that resources are directed strategically.

Why does this theme matter to FM?

Supply & Demand Pressures

The rapid growth of Malta's cultural offer has created pressure on the limited pool of technical, logistical, and creative professionals. This imbalance drives up costs, creates scheduling conflicts, and reduces efficiency. Additionally, clear pathways into festival-making, especially in production, logistics, and creative direction, remain underdeveloped. A coordinated, long-term strategy for sectoral investment, including physical infrastructure, training pipelines, and shared resources, would significantly strengthen FM's capacity and legacy.

Supporting Educational Pathways

The skills and knowledge required to sustain the festival sector begin with education and training. By building stronger relationships with educational institutions and supporting targeted skill development programmes, FM can help cultivate the next generation of festival-makers, from backstage technicians to creative leaders.

Overview

Thematic Pillar 4

Investing in the Local Cultural & Creative Sectors

SO12 Facilitating Professionalisation

12.1 Emerging Artist Platforms 12.2 Pathways to Festival-Making 12.3 Sector Awareness

SO13 Facilitating Operational Innovation

13.1 Investment in Space 13.2 Leading Sectoral Growth

Strategic Objectives & Key Actions

SO12 Facilitating Professionalisation

Key Actions		
Invest in the professionalisation of our arts festivals through strengthened collaborations with educational institutions and initiatives that support cultural leadership, visibility, mentorship, and skills development.	12.1 Emerging Artist Platforms	Establish platforms that help emerging artists and producers build the competencies, confidence, and networks needed to thrive professionally.
	12.2 Pathways to Festival-Making	Strengthen links between education and the creative sectors through mentorship, shadowing and other experiential opportunities in festival production within the organisation.
	12.3 Sector Awareness	Address misconceptions around creative work by building greater awareness of its professional and economic value, particularly among students, educators, and early-career creatives.

SO13 Leading Sectoral Growth

Key Actions		
Strengthen the capacity of the festivals ecosystem through targeted investment, data-led planning, and support structures that enable its sustainable growth and prosperity.	13.1 Investment in Space	Develop and maintain accessible, well-equipped creative spaces that support artists' practice, rehearsal, and production needs, including storage and workspace for festival participants, fostering collaboration, experimentation, and professional development.
	13.2 Advocacy	Leverage FM teams' collaborative relationships with other practitioners and organisations to facilitate dialogue, articulate sectoral needs, and advocate for equitable support structures that reinforce the sustainability of the wider festivals ecosystem.



Conclusion

This strategy marks a pivotal step in Festivals Malta's evolution. While ambitious, the strategic vision it elaborates is firmly rooted in the realities of its operational context and ecosystem, and will therefore act as an important framework to guide the organisation's growth through its day-to-day practices. This lays the groundwork for an approach to festival-making that is rooted in values that embrace risk, foster creative freedom, and champion experimentation and innovation, which are at the heart and the very essence of arts and culture.

To ensure its effective realisation, the strategy will be accompanied by an internal document offering more granular recommendations for actionable changes in organisational practice relating to each Key Action. These 'Steps for Implementation' will function as qualitative Key Performance Indicators, enabling progress to be monitored in ways that are aligned with Festivals Malta's values and responsive to the evolving European festivals cultural landscape, within which it operates.

The internal document will serve as a practical guide, equipping Festivals Malta with the structures and tools necessary to achieve its strategic objectives. Embedded within its operations will be a range of enablers, including research and evaluation mechanisms, dedicated strategic planning in key areas such as communications and audience development, the establishment of corresponding protocols, and the delivery of targeted training and development programmes.

Together, these measures will ensure that the strategy is not only aspirational but also operationally grounded, providing a dynamic, responsive, and sustainable foundation for Festivals Malta's continued growth and contribution to Malta's cultural, social, and economic life.



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