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KULTURFOND

Nordic Culture Fund Strategy 2019-2025

Based on the Nordic Culture Fund Strategy 2019-2022

Extended and revised, 2021

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Contents

Overall objectives	4
Mission	4
Overall objectives	4
Cross-cutting strategic initiatives	5
Development of differentiated support.....	6
Enhanced global focus	8
Strengthened network formation	10
Strengthened knowledge work and new contexts for cultural policy development	11
The Fund's communication and administration	13
Communication.....	13
The Fund's administration	14

Introduction

The Nordic Region has a population of 27 million people, and covers a geographical area the size of the seventh largest nation in the world. Globally, the Nordic Region is the world's twelfth largest economy. Culture and art form one of the cornerstones of the Region's extensive co-operation, and art and culture help to give the Nordic Region an ever-increasing significance in relation to the rest of the world. This is the area in which the Nordic Culture Fund operates, and it is here that we can make a difference.

The Nordic Culture Fund has been working in the area of cultural co-operation since 1966, on the basis of an agreement between the Nordic countries. The Fund is an independent body which was intended from the start to be able to act freely and rapidly, without having to be subject to review by national interests.

User and stakeholder surveys of the Nordic Culture Fund in 2018 and 2021 show that the fund is currently creating value in several areas of Nordic arts and culture. In particular, the Fund contributes to extending Nordic networks and contacts. Such networks and contacts provide the starting-point for developing new and innovative methods, approaches and activities to enhance the artistic quality of both the supported projects and of Nordic arts and cultural life in general. At the same time, the Fund contributes to increasing the accessibility of art and culture and the international range of artists. However, we have also identified a number of challenges, trends and factors that we will need to address in our work going forward. Accordingly, in this strategy we have identified three overall objectives and four cross-cutting strategic focus areas that will set the direction for our work in the coming period.

The Nordic Culture Fund operates in a well-developed sphere of Nordic art and cultural life. For many years, the Nordic countries have enjoyed an extensive cultural life, characterised by strong engagement from the state, civil society and citizens. However, the Nordic welfare societies have also undergone major changes over the past 30 years, which have meant a change in the role of cultural policy, art and culture in general. At the same time, artistic identity is in rapid development, pushing the boundaries of who can be considered artists and cultural practitioners.

The arts and culture may be seen as a force in their own right, but they are also crucial to our well-being and our ability to create sustainable societies, and in developing the relationship between centre and periphery. The Nordic countries have something to offer in the world arena. The 17 UN global goals have given us a common language for the planet's sustainable development until 2030. The role of culture in this connection is not clear, and a need has arisen to reflect on how art and culture contribute to the development of a sustainable world. Here, the Nordic Region has the opportunity to play a leading role.

The Nordic Culture Fund may be regarded as a public player with independent funds, the distribution of which does not derive from directly politically-controlled decisions. This position has become even more important in our own day, and must form the starting-point for the future work of the Fund. Through this strategy, we aim to ensure that culture can be without borders and open to encounters – so that all Nordic citizens, young and old, can enjoy the same right to participate in cultural civil society, and so that Nordic relevance can be enhanced and renewed, with a global focus in mind.

The Nordic Culture Fund's strategy was adopted in 2018. After two and a half years during which most of the strategy period has been and continues to be impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Fund, like other organisations in the Nordic Region, has found it necessary to extend and adjust its strategy.

With this extended strategy, we wish to emphasise co-operation in arts and culture as an essential key to the future, especially after a time in which countries have chosen to solve essential global issues individually – and in particular when we are constantly being reminded of the link between the local and global, the question of centre and periphery, the new public sphere of digitalisation, a changing artistic identity, changing audience experiences and a lack of cohesion and community.

Unfortunately, cultural co-operation in has been downgraded in the official Nordic co-operation. Moreover, this has occurred at a time when the arts and culture sector is in deep crisis as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and when countries are investing significantly at national level to ensure that cultural life survives and can be rekindled after the pandemic.

With this extended strategy, we therefore wish to highlight the importance of the strategy's three overarching objectives, each of which, in its own way, acts as a catalyst for the development of arts and culture and cohesion in the Nordic Region. At the same time, we are adjusting our cross-cutting efforts in order to build on our experiences from the first period of the strategy and work towards engaging even more actors in Nordic cultural co-operation and work in the future, so that we can produce concrete examples and demonstrate the enormous importance that art and culture has for our lives and future, both within and outside the Nordic Region.

Facts

The activities of the Nordic Culture Fund are governed by an intergovernmental agreement called the 'Agreement between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden on the Nordic Culture Fund', which was originally signed in 1966 and most recently amended in 2002.

Under the agreement, the sphere of activity of the Fund encompasses Nordic cultural co-operation to its full extent, both within and outside the Nordic Region. The agreement is intergovernmental, and any changes to the agreement must be ratified by each Nordic country.

The Nordic Culture Fund is an independent legal entity associated with the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The Nordic Culture Fund is bound and managed by a board, the 13 members of which are appointed by the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. Each Nordic country is represented by two participants, while the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland each have one representative.

The Fund currently has a budget of approximately DKK 36 million. The Nordic Culture Fund's grant is financed from the budget of the Nordic Council of Ministers, as approved by the Nordic Council.

According to its agreement, the Fund may also receive other financing for its purposes. This has been done through the establishment of the Fund's thematic initiative, Puls, in which additional funding was provided by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Danish Arts Foundation, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and the Swedish government. During the initial period of the strategy, the Fund has succeeded in optimising resources by partnering with private foundations, organisations and cultural institutions on projects that support the Fund's purpose and the overall objectives of the strategy.

On an annual basis, the Fund allocates support to around 250 cultural projects within and outside the Nordic Region. It also supports, creates and participates in the promotion, development and communication of knowledge of art and culture, and stimulates the development of cultural policy in the Nordic Region.

Overall objectives

MISSION

The Nordic Culture Fund works to support an innovative and dynamic artistic and cultural life in the Nordic Region that is diverse, accessible and of high quality.

Through this mission, we wish to stimulate the development of art and culture in the Nordic Region, as well as in a global context. A qualitatively well-functioning sphere of art and culture helps to develop the creative communities and milieux that characterise the Nordic Region. This is the foundation for ensuring that art and culture can be free and open to new encounters, new players and new discoveries.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

The Nordic Culture Fund has three overall objectives. Common to all activities of the Fund in the coming period is that they will support one or more of these three objectives.

The Nordic Culture Fund will promote the production, innovation and communication of arts and culture in the Nordic Region and globally.

The Nordic Culture Fund must work on the basis of knowledge-based administration of its grants. These grants must help to improve the possibilities for artists and cultural players to jointly create quality, and thereby produce and communicate art and cultural expressions with Nordic relevance, in both Nordic and global contexts. In its grant allocation, the Fund will support risk-taking, networking and knowledge development. As a general rule, the Fund does not provide support for the basic financing of companies, but may support the start-up phase of artistic and cultural activities.

The Nordic Culture Fund will promote artistic and cultural networks within the Nordic cultural co-operation.

Networking, knowledge-sharing and mutual inspiration are essential to ensure that the work of the Fund is anchored in art and culture in the Nordic Region, and that the Fund continues to have a legitimate role in Nordic cultural co-operation. Besides supporting the formation of long-term relations through financial support, the Fund will work proactively to promote and participate in networks, e.g. in specific sectors and at regional, national and international level.

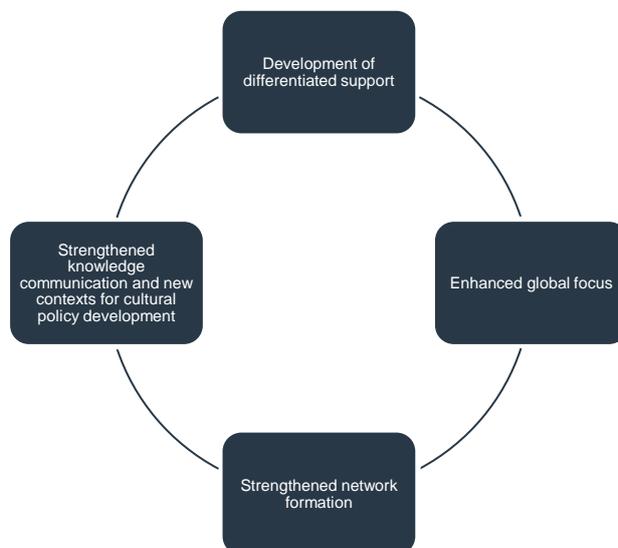
The Nordic Culture Fund will develop and communicate knowledge of arts and cultural life in order to stimulate the development of cultural policy in the Nordic Region.

The Nordic Culture Fund is uniquely positioned to play a role as an active disseminator of knowledge, creating new possibilities and structures in order to collect and convey knowledge of art and culture. The Fund must hereby stimulate the development of cultural policy discussions in order to support and influence the opportunities for art and culture to develop and form a significant, legitimate and contemporary part of society in the Nordic Region and the rest of the world.

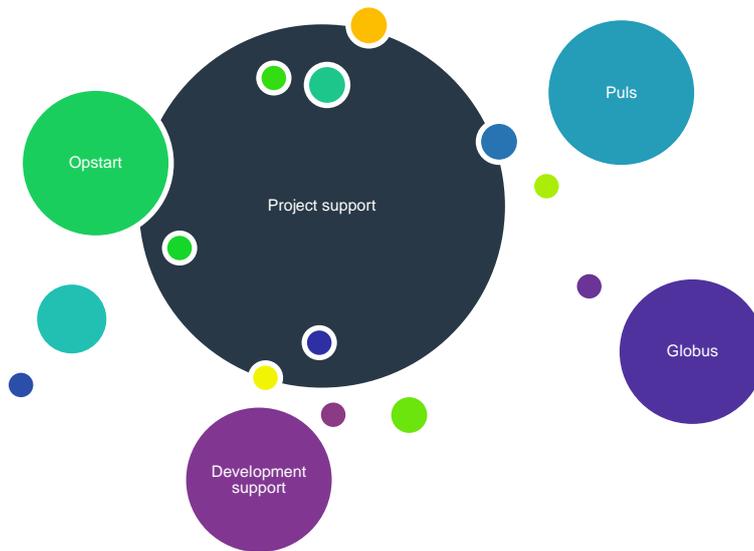
Cross-cutting strategic initiatives

On the basis of the overall objectives, we have formulated four cross-cutting strategic initiatives, each of which supports the overall objectives, thereby setting the direction for the Fund's work in the coming period.

The four strategic initiatives reflect development potentials and challenges that the Fund's secretariat, experts and board have previously analysed and discussed with resource persons in separate strategic networks. In addition, they reflect the work of the Fund on the strategy in the initial years, which forms the basis for adjusting and extending the strategy. Finally, they are an expression of efforts in areas where we can see that the Fund can continue its development and make a difference. Although the four initiatives have a mutual influence on each other, they are presented separately in the following sections.



DEVELOPMENT OF DIFFERENTIATED SUPPORT

**What do we see?**

The ambition to support art and culture that is characterised by diversity, accessibility and high quality requires a differentiated support practice that is both open and capable of grasping new trends. The Fund has developed this in recent years, both with the funding programmes Opstart, Puls and Globus Opstart, and with new criteria for all project support. In addition, the Fund has begun to provide development support to projects characterised by the experimental development of themes, or organisations relevant to the Fund's strategy and its thematic support programmes. Moreover, as part of the efforts to broaden the circle of key stakeholders in Nordic cultural co-operation and support the Fund's strategic efforts, the Fund may engage in and award multi-annual development support to new Nordic partnerships.

The Fund's continuous development of differentiated support has allowed us to reach entirely new target groups and facilitate the building up of new, strong relations and forms of co-operation. However, the development of differentiated support also requires the development of an overall view. It is no longer merely a question of considering applications for individual projects, but of developing networks and relations in a long-term perspective. It takes time to build up lasting relations, and sometimes there is also a need to try out different collaborative combinations before the applicants can find out what works, and who they work well with.

In the coming period, the Fund's financial support will therefore create possibilities for contributing to projects on the basis of a broader overall view and a longer time perspective.

Initiatives

As a cross-cutting strategic initiative, the Fund is working to develop differentiated support in holistically-oriented processes. We are also working to ensure that the Fund's support programmes will be relevant to applicants in the future, and to identify opportunities for specific thematic initiatives. This means that we work in the following developmental tracks:

- We work holistically with the Fund's applications, and continuously work to create a simple application flow for applicants, and a simple process for decisions and following-up on applications.
- We are developing our support programmes with a long-term dimension in mind, so that actors have an improved possibility of creating networks that will provide a foundation for increased quality and innovation.

- We work to develop knowledge about trends in funded projects, and we explore the potential of cultural actors and arts institutions for sustainable development in partnership with other foundations.
- We work with strategic development support, established in the form of partnerships, so that the partners, including the Nordic Culture Fund, can monitor the projects over a period of time and gain unique and relevant knowledge.

ENHANCED GLOBAL FOCUS

**What do we see?**

The global perspective has been a strategic focus area for the Nordic Culture Fund during the first period of the strategy. For historical reasons, the global perspective is in many ways a natural one for the Nordic Culture Fund. The Fund was established immediately after the Second World War as an autonomous organisation, with the aim of working internationally in the Nordic Region and beyond. There has long been a clear, common international focus in the Nordic countries. But in these times, political interest in international arts and cultural co-operation appears to be on the wane.

Through the analysis of applications, and after dialogue with many actors from the cultural sector in the Nordic countries and around the world, the Fund has observed that our surroundings and our cultural projects have become increasingly borderless, and that this is a time of change in which the models that used to characterise international action are no longer as relevant as they previously were. The starting-point for many approaches and initiatives in the Nordic countries with the 'internationalisation' agenda argues for the relevance of seeing oneself in relation to the world, and the world in relation to oneself. Many countries simultaneously act with conflicting demands for a national focus and a competitive strategy in relation to the rest of the world. With a declining interest in international cultural co-operation in the Nordic countries and in the official Nordic co-operation, the Fund has also wished to provide an alternative to the requirement of national affiliation or national or regional purposes for international co-operation.

Shortly before the world was hit by the onset of the Covid-19 epidemic, the Nordic Culture Fund launched Globus: a new programme designed to give artists and cultural actors new opportunities to seek funding support, in a less conditional manner than previously, for projects that extend beyond the Nordic Region. The new global initiative was aimed at expanding perspectives on Nordic art and culture. With Globus, the Fund wished to think about cultural support in a different way. The new programme was initially tested in a few selected pilot projects, in which we wished to obtain concrete experience with projects that could lead to a more open support programme with diverse approaches. Through this work, the Fund co-operated with a number of different partners both inside and outside the Nordic Region who could help to ensure a broader financing basis and a long-term focus.

The launch of Globus generated such a high level of interest that in the autumn of 2020, the Fund launched Globus Opstart as a new support programme.

Initiatives

Globus has already proved itself as an example of how to build bridges between different cultural and professional environments, provide new perspectives on cultural life, and contribute to new understandings of the interaction between the local and

the global. The Fund will continue this work and will provide inspiration for new models of international cultural co-operation, including at national level.

The cross-cutting strategic initiative must be characterised by the following:

- We will explore new tracks and arenas for artists and cultural practitioners in a global context, and we will collaborate with resource persons who can contribute knowledge of relevant artistic and cultural arenas in key international art and culture environments.
- We will experiment with new formats and create artist platforms as well as facilitating deep and sustainable networks that can possess global relevance.
- We will participate in global networks that discuss the development of art and culture.

STRENGTHENED NETWORK FORMATION



What do we see?

The role of the Nordic Culture Fund in relation to network formation is becoming increasingly clear. This takes place both through the Fund's financial support, which always in itself incorporates an element of networking, and by virtue of the unique role of the Fund as a proactive driver of and participant in networks. The value of networks is considerable. Relations here are growing exponentially, and strong networks create the possibility of relating to other networks in other contexts – including globally.

In recent years the Fund has accumulated valuable experience in this area, and we have encountered a wish for this experience to be brought into play in more areas. There is also a demand for a player that can bring together the national artistic and cultural institutions across the Nordic Region and ensure that they meet and exchange knowledge and experience. This applies inter alia to national public institutions and philanthropic funds who do not have the networks or sufficient knowledge to lift their programmes and the projects they support to a Nordic and international level. Strengthening these networks increases the mutual relevance and impact of everyone's efforts and work.

Initiatives

In accordance with its overall objectives, the Nordic Culture Fund must participate in and facilitate professional networks. We must utilise the unique knowledge and experience that we thereby acquire to strengthen the further anchoring of the networks in art and culture. The cross-cutting strategic initiative implies that:

- We will play a clearer co-ordinating and unifying role for relevant national arts and cultural institutions in the Nordic Region.
- We will co-operate with private and philanthropic arts and culture foundations in the Nordic Region to help them bring their programmes into a Nordic and international context to a greater degree – and in doing so, help to create broader funding for Nordic cultural co-operation.
- We will establish and support frameworks for strong, long-term networks, thereby enabling actors to promote the quality and sustainability of their own efforts.

STRENGTHENED KNOWLEDGE WORK AND NEW CONTEXTS FOR CULTURAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT



What do we see?

The role of art and culture has changed in the welfare society, and there are discussions in many contexts concerning how this role may be viewed in a modern welfare society. Despite the historically strong commitment to culture and the arts in the Nordic countries, cultural policy, as an autonomous area, is currently weakened. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated a development that has been underway for some time: cultural consumption has been moving away from the traditional cultural institutions to the digital cultural platforms. At the same time, the global economic crisis has had a devastating impact on the arts and culture sector, making us aware of how integral it is to society. Moreover, artistic identity is in rapid development, pushing the boundaries of who can be considered artists and cultural practitioners. The arts and culture may be seen as a force in their own right, but they are also crucial to our well-being and our ability to create sustainable societies, and in developing the relationship between centre and periphery.

The trend points to an increased need for knowledge, discussion and debate in the Nordic Region, and to an increased need to create new contexts for cultural policy development. The Fund's strategic efforts as an active producer of knowledge have allowed it to create new contexts for the development of cultural policy at Nordic level. In its organisation, the Nordic Culture Fund is anchored in politics and in the implementation of this, which makes the Fund a unique body in the context of Nordic co-operation and cultural policy. The Fund has thus stimulated the development of cultural policy discussions at regional, national and Nordic level. We have also entered into partnerships that have strengthened the Fund's position as a proactive player, both working actively with cultural and arts institutions and stimulating policy development in specific areas. In this work, we have recognised the need to understand national administrative initiatives, support schemes and cross-border cultural policy priorities. This knowledge has been the prerequisite for raising cultural policy into the international context, of which the Nordic countries are a part.

The Fund can see that much knowledge is still being lost across borders (national, sectoral, fields of practice), and that there is a need for developed knowledge production and navigation between diverse actors across borders in the Nordic Region. We see that many more actors would be able to come together and help to proactively stimulate the development of cultural policy by using resources to gather knowledge and create arenas for conversations at regional, national and Nordic level. There is a need for knowledge-driven idea development and for more people to take part in Nordic cultural co-operation. More people must be involved in asking questions and coming up with new answers, so that we can maintain the transnational nature of art and culture in terms of expression, collaboration, accessibility and involvement.

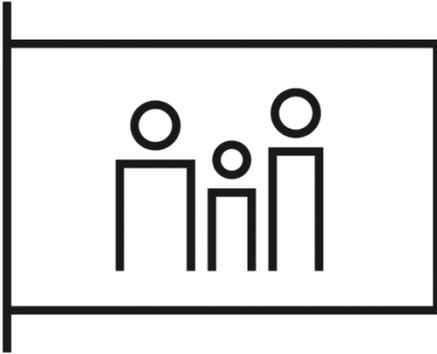
Initiatives

As a cross-cutting strategic initiative, we will take an active role as a facilitator of knowledge production and policy development by engaging in partnerships with actors and organisations who can help to research, collect and debate knowledge about the field of arts and culture. With other organisations, we will create new contexts for cultural policy discussions and knowledge-sharing, and together with others we will anchor our initiatives at either national or Nordic level. This cross-cutting initiative means that during the period:

- We will publish an anthology that discusses art, culture, democracy and society, and establish discussion forums and meetings on the basis of this anthology.
- We will facilitate and formalise the organisation of a Nordic partnership project. In this way, we will help to clarify the value and role of art and culture in society, create new contexts for cultural policy in the Nordic Region and support sustainable Nordic and global partnerships and networks for art and culture.
- We will engage in strategic collaborations that have the potential to be policy-developing in the Nordic Region and beyond – for example in talent development, sustainable development of cultural institutions, and the interface of the arts with health, professional rights, etc.
- We will strengthen our co-operation with national authorities for cultural support, and create better opportunities for Nordic cultural co-operation to be seen as an integral part of international cultural co-operation.

The Fund's communication and administration

COMMUNICATION



The Nordic Culture Fund works strategically with its communication as a disseminator of knowledge, a legitimate support provider and a professional and open partner. The Fund works on the basis of a separate communication strategy, which will continue to reinforce the cross-cutting efforts of the strategy in the coming period through the development of the Fund's brand identity, external communication and knowledge work. Similarly, the communication must support the Fund's proactive approach to network creation and help to ensure that the networks are used to create further reach and resonance for the Fund's efforts.

An interest analysis carried out in May 2018 and 2021 shows that increased communication efforts on different platforms and through various initiatives (website, newsletter, Facebook, project ambassadors, etc.) has led to an increased awareness of the Fund and contributed to the Fund continuing to be seen as a relevant actor in cultural life and cultural policy contexts. The survey also showed that the Fund has succeeded in streamlining its communication with applicants and facilitating the digital project journey from application to project completion. However, the Fund will continue to work on developing its applicant-oriented communication on the website and in its criteria and application forms, in order to create more relevant awareness of the Fund's support work, including among new applicants.

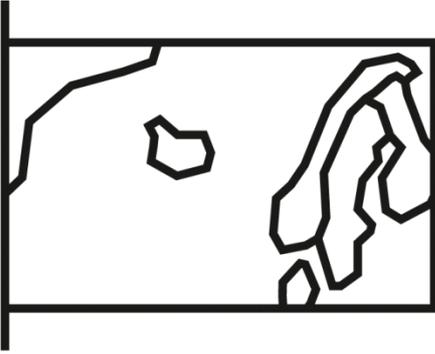
As the Fund's cultural policy profile and role in several networks becomes clearer, new needs have also arisen in the day-to-day communication work. Communication is to a greater extent taking place in the various dialogues, projects and physical and digital networks of which the Fund is a part, as well as in the many dialogues and networking processes where the Fund's brand and legitimacy are created, reinforced and brought into play. It is therefore important that the Fund continues to actively reflect and adapt its communication to current trends, and thinks even more strategically about stakeholders and their needs when planning communication efforts and new initiatives.

The involvement and engagement of stakeholders is further challenged in a knowledge and network society, where communication and dialogues are spread across different digital platforms and daily communication choices have become more selective and reflexive. The Fund will therefore more actively engage stakeholders and develop methods that can help to strengthen the Fund's communication and knowledge work.

In line with the Fund's overall goals, we see it as essential to engage in new contexts and networks in order to raise awareness and become a more relevant actor in connection with cultural life and cultural policy.

In this area, the Fund will continue to be a sought-after actor and keynote speaker, working continuously on the dissemination perspective through project ambassadors and national arts and cultural institutions.

THE FUND'S ADMINISTRATION



The board, secretariat and experts of the Nordic Culture Fund are the three central parts of the organisation, and jointly undertake knowledge-based, high-quality work with a high degree of legitimacy. The Fund works continuously to develop roles, missions and forms of work between the three parts.

The Fund's supreme authority is its board. The 13 members of the board are appointed by the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers for two-year terms, which distinguishes the board's composition from all other co-operation bodies and institutions within the official Nordic co-operation, as the board includes both politicians and civil servants.

The Fund's experts assess the quality of applications, and must have a high level of professional legitimacy. Experts are appointed for three years at a time, and the number of experts may vary. The composition of the expert group is continuously assessed in relation to the applications received and the needs and new trends in the arts and cultural life. The Fund seeks nominations for the experts from the national cultural support authorities.

The secretariat undertakes the day-to-day administration of the Fund from its office in Copenhagen, and usually represents the Fund externally. The secretariat currently has seven staff members and is headed by a director, who is appointed by the Fund's board.

The Nordic Culture Fund and the Nordic Council of Ministers have a co-operative administration agreement which states that the Fund will be provided with administrative services in the areas of personnel administration, financial and accounting administration, IT and telephony, services and other administration by the secretariat. According to a status agreement, the Fund's employees are subject to the same employment conditions as those that apply to the secretariat of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the period of employment is limited to a maximum of eight years.

As part of the process of developing its operational capacity, the Fund has implemented a development project that has optimised its internal workflows, IT system and digital communication. In the first period of the strategy, this has already led to noticeable efficiency improvements in the Fund's IT and administration systems.

In the years 2021-2024, the Fund is facing budget cuts agreed upon by the ministers for Nordic co-operation. The Fund is therefore working strategically to adjust its budget, without compromising on the quality of its administration, support provision and strategic initiatives. This involves, inter alia, a review and revision of the Fund's administration agreement, which is intended to lead to a correct relationship between the actual support received and the payments made. In its development work, the Fund will furthermore actively seek out and make itself available to partnerships in which external funding or resources may be provided, linked to specific development projects or collaborations. In this way, linked to the Fund's development work or support provision, more resources can be made available for the work of the Fund.

The Fund aims to be an attractive employer, with employees of high competence and performance. This is a prerequisite for working on the overall objectives of the Fund and on cross-cutting strategic initiatives. The staff of the secretariat must therefore be given good opportunities to maintain and develop their skills and knowledge within the framework of their employment positions and roles.

The activities and administration of the Nordic Culture Fund are monitored and audited by the Danish National Audit Office, which provides its auditor's assessment and opinion annually to the Nordic Council and its control committee. On the basis of the Committee's report, the Council will decide on exemption from liability for the Fund's board.