A Ministry of Arts & Culture Is Progress. Meaningful Investment Must Follow.

2027 ARTS & CULTURE BUDGET ANALYSIS AND ADVOCACY BRIEF | NOVEMBER 2026

The Key Message

Zambia's establishment of a dedicated Ministry of Culture and Arts is a significant institutional milestone. The 2027 budget also nearly doubles the allocation to the Arts Development and Management Programme. Yet the new Ministry receives only 0.083% of the national budget, and the National Arts Council's allocation grows by just 5%. Recognition has advanced; sustained, accessible investment in artists, creative enterprises and cultural heritage must follow.

Budget at a glance

Indicator	2026	2027
National budget	K253.09 billion	K284.77 billion
Arts Development and Management	K27.49 million	K53.57 million
Arts programme share of national budget	0.0109%	0.0188%
National Arts Council transfer	K3.60 million	K3.78 million
Arts infrastructure sub-programme	K10.00 million	K10.00 million
Dedicated Culture and Arts Ministry	Not established	K235.42 million (0.0827%)

What changed between 2026 and 2027?

1 A dedicated institutional home. In 2026, arts development was one of four programmes within the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts. The 2027 budget provides a separate Ministry of Culture and Arts, with K120.24 million for Culture Preservation and Development, K53.57 million for Arts Development and Management, and K61.61 million for Management and Support Services.

2 A substantial increase in the arts programme. The arts allocation rises by K26.08 million, or 94.9% in nominal terms. Within it, Arts Development, Management and Support increases from K17.49 million to K43.57 million (+149.1%), while the infrastructure sub-programme remains at K10 million.

3 A smaller increase for the sector's statutory institution, National Arts Council (NAC). Transfers to the National Arts Council rise from K3.60 million to K3.78 million (+5.0%). The contrast with programme-level growth calls for greater clarity on how increased funding will reach practitioners and creative enterprises.

4 A mixed picture in the broader functional allocation. Recreation, Culture and Religion rises from approximately K685.57 million to K736.28 million, but falls as a share of the national budget from about 0.271% to 0.259%. This classification is broader than arts and culture alone and should not be interpreted as direct arts spending.

What is encouraging

- Arts Development, Management and Support rises from K17.5m to K43.6m (+149%).
- Arts is now 22.8% of its own ministry, against 7.7% of the former Youth, Sport and Arts head in 2026.
- Targets rise to 90 arts events (80 in 2026), with a new target of 100 artists empowered.

Where it falls short

- **Arts infrastructure is still flat at K10m for the second year running**, a real-terms cut when adjusted for inflation. The 2026 plan to construct a national arts center seems to be silent or has dropped out, leaving 3 rehabilitations.
- **The National Arts Council transfer is K3.8m**, up only 5% from K3.6m.
- **Most of the increase is spending on goods and services** (K21.2m to K37.4m), not clearly direct support to artists.

- The wider Recreation, Culture and Religion function grew only 10.1%, slower than the budget, and its share slipped from 0.264% to 0.259%.
- For scale, the Constituency Development Fund is K9.05bn, about 170 times the arts programme.

What the figures mean for the 1% ambition

One per cent of the 2027 national budget would be approximately K2.85 billion. The new Ministry's K235.42 million represents about 8.3% of that illustrative amount, leaving a difference of approximately K2.61 billion. This is not a like-for-like measure of all government cultural expenditure. Against the African Union's aspirational benchmark of allocating at least 1% of national budgets to arts, culture and heritage, the specific arts development allocation represents only 1.88% of the financing target, leaving an illustrative shortfall of approximately **K2.79 billion (98.12%)**.

Five (5) priorities for policy and budget action

- **Ministry of Culture and Arts:** Publish a clear cultural financing and implementation roadmap, with transparent programme-level allocations, geographic distribution and measurable benefits for artists, creative businesses and heritage institutions.
- **Ministry of Finance and National Planning:** Develop a medium-term, cross-government cultural expenditure tracking framework and progressively increase investment, linked to employment, enterprise development and cultural preservation outcomes.
- **Parliament:** More closely interrogate the composition and execution of the K53.57 million arts programme, revise the unchanged K10 million infrastructure provision, and the modest increase in National Arts Council transfers; request quarterly expenditure and performance reporting.
- **National Arts Council and cultural-sector stakeholders**: Strengthen transparent, equitable access to grants, skills development, market opportunities and other forms of support, particularly for emerging artists, women and young creatives.
- **Civil society and creative practitioners:** Monitor budget releases, procurement, beneficiaries and outcomes; connect budget evidence with artists' lived experiences and maintain constructive dialogue on the 1% cultural financing ambition.

What PAAGZ will track in 2027

Beyond approved allocations, accountability should focus on actual releases and expenditure, the number and diversity of artists supported, jobs and enterprises strengthened, infrastructure delivered, and benefits to cultural and heritage preservation. The 2027 Yellow Book identifies targets including 90 arts events supported, 100 artists empowered and three arts infrastructure facilities rehabilitated. These will be tracked against results, not only activities.

Overall Summary

Zambia's cultural sector has made an institutional breakthrough, accompanied by a meaningful increase in the dedicated arts programme. The broader financing picture nevertheless indicates that recognition has not yet been matched by a transformative shift in national budget priorities. PAAGZ has in the past through advocacy champions like the National Working Group (NWG) made the case for recognition. What remains now is shifting the advocacy towards shaping financing, priorities and accountability within the new Ministry.

"Zambia has given culture and arts a ministry. It must now give it the investment it deserves."

Sources and interpretation

1. Government of Zambia, 2026 Yellow Book, Head 76, Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts, pp. 613–615 and programme detail;
2. Government of Zambia, 2027 Yellow Book, Head 55, Ministry of Culture and Arts, pp. 635–637 and programme detail;
3. Ministry of Finance and National Planning, 2026 and 2027 National Budget Briefs, Figures are budget estimates, (not actual releases or expenditure).
4. Note: Rounded figures may differ slightly from calculations using full kwacha amounts. Comparisons between the new ministry and the prior combined ministry require care to be exercised.