
VRC SURVEY ONE

Highland arts and emerging artists



COLLECTIVE

CONTENTS



Executive Summary	2
Background	3
Results	4
Conclusion	11
Recommendations	14
Appendices	15

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This survey was released by Vivid Roots Collective (VRC) online on the 30th May 2021. The survey asks respondents about their experiences as emerging artists in relation to the Highland arts scene. We hoped that the response to the survey would help us to understand the barriers, needs and desires of local emerging artists as we shape our first year business plan. The survey reached a small number of respondents, the majority of whom felt that there were not enough opportunities for emerging artists in the Highlands. In this report, we will describe the responses in detail and propose some of the ways in which VRC hopes to address them.

It is important to note that due to the small number of responses, this survey is not fully representative of all Highland-based emerging artists.

BACKGROUND

As an emerging theatre company with a focus on creating opportunities for local emerging artists, we decided to create a survey to gather genuine experiences from these individuals. This would allow us to determine and evidence the needs of local emerging artists as we created our first year business plan. For this survey, the questions were crafted to allow space for experienced artists and artists from other areas to share their views. This was to allow us to gather a wide range of responses from which we could choose our direction. We wanted to determine firstly what opportunities respondents felt there were in the Highlands for emerging artists, if this has an impact on whether they want to stay in the Highlands, if the problems/assets could be attributed to the wider culture of Highland arts, and if the respondents themselves had a view for what could be better.

Since reflecting upon the responses to the survey, however, we have decided that our analysis of the responses would take a more targeted approach to considering how VRC should respond to these needs/issues. As such, we have focused on the first CHECK(No) questions as we felt that there wasn't scope within this report or, in fact, within our company to be able to offer an analysis of the wider culture of Highland arts. This is something that we strive to be able to respond to in the future.

OTHER RESEARCH

Framework Theatre Company's *Building a Framework* (August 2021)

Framework recently released a report on a similar survey that was targeted towards emerging artists in Scotland as a whole. Although our survey reached only 1/5 of the respondents, the findings were remarkably similar; two key points that were reflected in our survey were that: 1) Emerging artists expressed there were little to no opportunities for emerging artists and 2) Unpaid work was determined to be the biggest barrier preventing emerging artists from accessing opportunities.

Unpublished write up from Young Scot and Creative Scotland's Youth Arts Recovery Jam (February 2021)

As a member of the National Youth Arts Advisory Group (NYAAG), co-Founder, Laura Walker, was involved in the Youth Arts Recovery Jam. This 'Jam' used a focus group of young people to identify priorities for youth arts in Scotland. Similar themes were emergent compared to Framework's report. As an extension, these young people felt that there was a lack of funding for youth arts specifically. A key priority that came out of this write up that was not covered in Building a Framework or the VRC Survey 1 was that young people felt there was not enough support in education for those who were interested in pursuing the creative industries further. This is likely due to the age range of participants (in the Jam, the youngest respondents were school-aged whereas Framework only surveyed 1% of respondents under 18 and VRC' youngest respondent was 21) and the Framework and VRC surveys were targeting emerging artists over young artists.

RESULTS

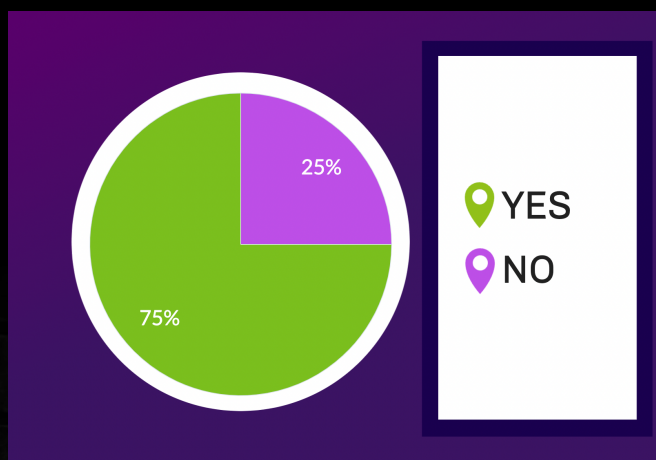
METHODOLOGY

We targeted Facebook groups such as *Highlands and Islands Theatre Makers* and *University of the Highlands and Islands Drama and Performance* where we expected to find Highland-based emerging artists as well as using our own personal networks. The survey was only circulated online (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) which was the easiest and safest way to gather responses during the pandemic but will have limited our responses due to digital poverty, a passive approach to circulation and due to the limits of our online audience reach as a new company. It is perhaps owing to our unestablished brand that we received only 20 responses.

The survey was in two parts. In the first section, we aimed to determine the demographic of respondents. We offered qualitative responses to our question on gender identity to allow respondents to express this in their own words. We also asked respondents about their occupation (current and desired) and finally asked respondents to describe their interpretation of 'emerging artists' so that we could understand their perspective when answering the remainder of the survey. In the second section, we asked respondents whether they were planning on moving to/remaining in the Highlands, we asked them about the opportunities they were aware of and would like to see more of, and we asked them about the successes and downfalls of Highland arts in general (see Appendix B for full survey).

RESULTS

QUESTION 1: Do you live in the Highlands?

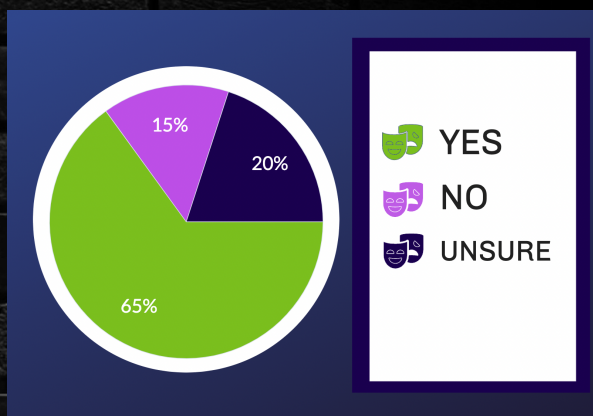


Most of our reach is within the Inverness area (55%) though this does show some extension to the rest of the Highlands (20%) and beyond (25%).

QUESTION 2: If 'Yes' to the above) Where in the Highlands are you based?



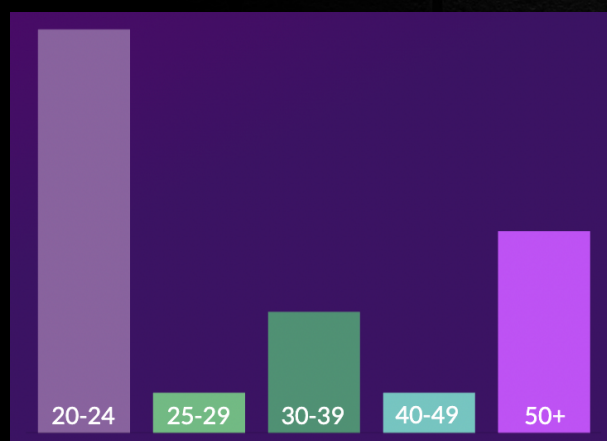
QUESTION 3: Do you identify as an emerging artist?



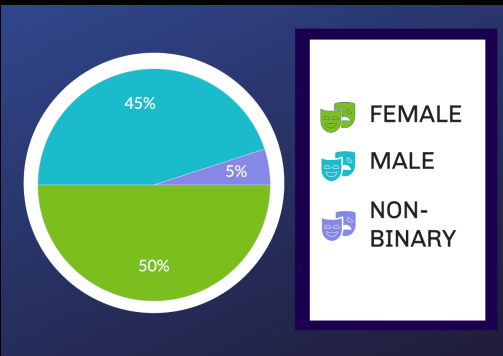
Most of our respondents (65%) identify as emerging artists, 20% are not sure and 15% do not identify as emerging artists.

QUESTION 4: How old are you?

Half (50%) of our respondents are under the age of 25.
Our oldest respondent is 70 years old and youngest is 21.
The mean age is: 35
21, 23 and 24 are the most common ages.

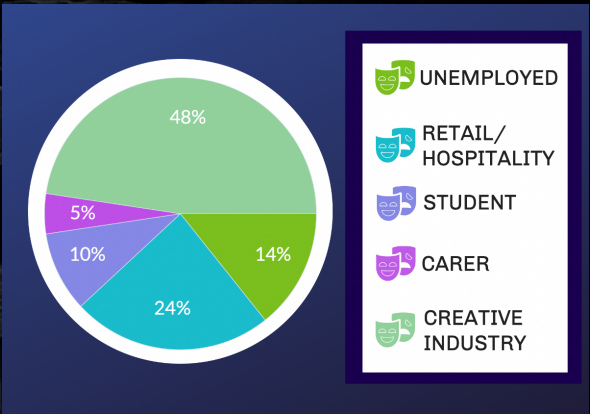


QUESTION 5: What is your gender identity?

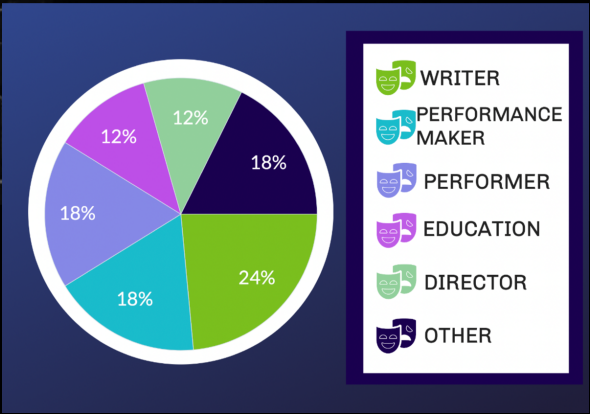


The average age for women is 36.5
The average age for men is 34.2
The average age for non-binary respondents is 31

QUESTION 6:What is your occupation?

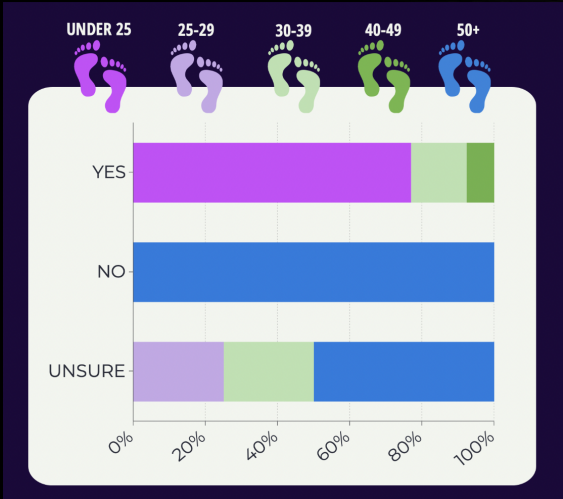


QUESTION 7: (If different from the above) What is your desired occupation?



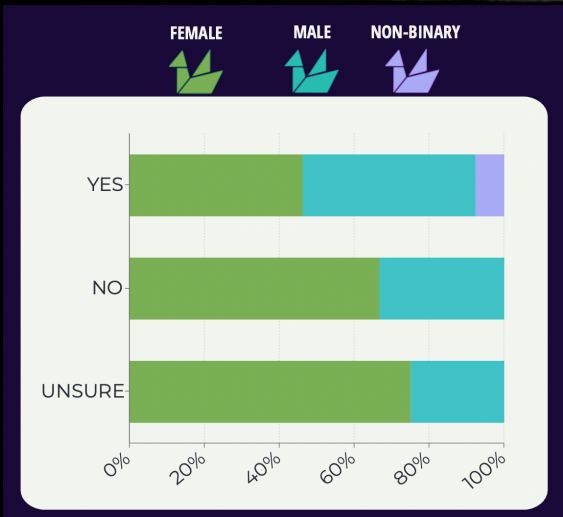
'Other' included: production manager, audio drama creator and video maker.

SOME COMPARISONS
Emerging artist & age



All of our respondents under the age of 25 identify as emerging artists.
Three of our four oldest respondents do not identify as emerging artists.
All of the respondents who marked 'unsure' are over 25.

Emerging artist & gender



The balance of male and female respondents is generally equal across age and identity as emerging (with the exception of 'unsure' which is strongly female).
We only had one non-binary responded, who identified as emerging.

QUESTIONS 6 & 7 Continued

8 out of 20 respondents didn't answer 'desired occupation' but only 3 of our respondents didn't identify as emerging.

All three respondents who didn't identify as emerging are working in creative industry occupations.

One respondent was unsure about their desired occupation, they are also unsure if they identify as an emerging artist; another respondent listed multiple desired occupations and indicated that they were 'still working it out'.

Four respondents cited multiple *current* occupations.

Another four (different from those above) cited multiple *desired* occupations.

QUESTION 8: How would you define 'emerging artist'?

As these were qualitative responses, we have done our best to break them down to categories. This is the same for all qualitative responses.

That it was synonymous with 'early career': 9 (45%)

That it relates to the quantity of paid/professional work: 6 (30%)

That it relates to the discovery/sharing of talent: 4 (20%)

That it relates to learning and development: 3 (15%)

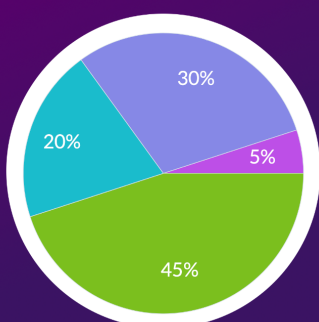
That it relates to audience reach: 2 (10%)

Answers we found interesting:

"An artist out of education, looking to make their art"

"Another buzz word that means very little" *Does not identify as an emerging artist*

QUESTION 9: Are you planning on remaining in / moving to the Highlands to practice in the creative industries?



- YES
- NO
- UNSURE
- N/A

The mode response is 'yes'.
Although 25% don't live in the Highlands, only 5% answered N/A.

QUESTION 10: Please explain the answer you gave to the previous question.

Reasons why yes

Expressed that the Highlands was home / roots / connections: 4

Expressed a desire to contribute to cultural growth / build opportunities: 3

Expressed they have had success already: 2 (neither identified as emerging artists)

Reasons why no

Expressed that there were more opportunities elsewhere: 9

Expressed there were barriers to accessibility: 1

Expressed the Highlands was isolating: 1

Expressed there is too little funding: 1

Expressed they had a lack of success: 1

As these were qualitative responses, we have done our best to break them down to categories.

QUESTION 11: What kinds of opportunities are you aware of that support emerging artists in the Highlands? (if any)

None	11
Eden Court	3
Artist residencies	2
UHI degree	2
Impact 30	1
XpoNorth	1
Making Space	1
Lots of opportunities but down to the individual to find them	1
HYAH	1
Not enough pay for EAs in this opportunities	1
Touring Network promoters	1
Creative Academy	1

One respondent suggested that: '[There are] lots of opportunities but [it's] down to the individual to find them'; another also remarked that there are not enough *paid* opportunities for emerging artists.

QUESTION 12: What kind of barriers prevent you from accessing arts opportunities in the Highlands? (if any)

Not enough public funding	6
Nothing to access	5
Not knowing where/how to find/access opportunities	4
Time	3
Transport	3
Geography	3
No barriers	2
Motivation	1
Lack of education	1
Lack of diversity	1
Unanswered	1

Two of these responses that we found most interesting indicated: 1) that funders not interested in Highland area and 2) that people feel they don't have the time or money to take up voluntary opportunities and there are not enough paid opportunities

QUESTION 13: What kind of opportunities would you like to see more of in the Highlands?

Funding / paid work	7
Opportunities to create new work	4
Collaboration	4
Local / professional theatre companies	3
Arts groups	2
Diversity and inclusive projects	2
Outdoor arts spaces/performances	2
Community / social practice	2
Residencies	1
Internships	1
Arts in education	1
Workshops	1
Projects that travel to communities, that don't expect people to travel	1

QUESTION 14: In your opinion, what do you think are the issues with Highland arts and culture? (If any)

Not enough funding	6
Central belt bias	6
Not enough professional and creative work	5
Not focussed on enough at a government level	4
Not answered	3
Lack of diversity	3
Geographical isolation / lack of transportation infrastructure	2
Takes a back seat to tourism	2
Lack of affordable spaces	1
None	1

In this question, one participant talks about the Scottish cultural policy of monoculture that doesn't recognise the diversity of Scottish life/geography/cultures. The Highland trad arts scene alienates Highland arts from current performance practice. This sense of lack of cultural identity was shared by another respondent.

QUESTION 15: How do you think the Highlands can improve in arts and culture?

Better promotion of opportunities	4
Connect artists and organisations	4
Not answered	3
Focus on contemporary art, turn away from traditional	3
Space for new work	3
Engage with younger audience	2
More paid work	2
Better accessibility for theatre	2
Education	2
Community engagement	2
Better transport	2
More companies	1
More diversity	1
Decentralisation	1
More funding	1
Artist led change	1
It won't change	1

CONCLUSION

Before we begin our conclusion and recommendations, we would like to acknowledge again that this is a very small and, hence, certainly not a representative sample of Highland-based artists. As such, we will focus on what this sample may allude to. Furthermore, our initial recommendation is that VRC organises focus groups which, through recruitment, may generate a higher number of respondents. Focus groups will allow us to receive specific and targeted responses about some of the points raised in this survey and will allow us to cultivate more nuanced responses.

Regarding the demographic that responded to the survey, we feel that it is encouraging to see that our audience as VRC does span beyond Inverness into the Highlands and beyond. Furthermore, we think that it is a good sign that we are reaching a range of ages, and that we are getting responses from emerging artists who are not young people. By: 'encouraging' and 'good sign', I mean that for our audience reach and engagement, this is a positive. As recent graduates and all young women, it would be expected that the majority of responses would come from a similar demographic. Conversely, we failed to include a question about ethnic identity, which was an oversight on our part. The Highlands is largely populated by white people (only 1.4% Asian or other non-white ethnicity) so it would be helpful to future surveys to identify this protected characteristic in respondents.

It was interesting and affirming to us that 25% of our respondents are either unsure or do identify as an emerging artists despite already working in creative industries occupations. This supports some of the statements under QUESTION 8 that the term 'emerging artist' is someone who is still developing their craft. It doesn't necessarily have anything to do with education or regular employment (though of course some of these sentiments – graduating and working professionally – are also mentioned as criteria). This provides a neat segway into the definitions of 'emerging artist': we found that, even in this small sample, there were a variety of interpretations of what it means to be emerging. It is true that (as an example) someone who has been working as a writer for their whole life may be an emerging director at the age of 64; therefore, years of professional work may not be the best

measure. There was also a tension between 'emerging' as being someone who is still learning what their practice is and someone who knows their practice but is emerging into professional work. Some of our respondents mentioned education, others didn't. To honour the nondescript nature of the term 'emerging artists', VRC pledges to recognise 'emergence' as a matter of identity and, where conflicts occur, to address this on a case-by-case basis to the best of our ability. This is contrary to our original position which was that 'emergence' would be determined by the number of years of professional practice. Upon reflection, this would be incredibly difficult to quantify due to the nature of the freelance industry.

Initially, we were surprised by how many respondents were interested in remaining in / moving to the Highlands. In fact, due to the discrepancy between the number of respondents who already live in the Highlands and those who didn't answer whether they would like to stay in / move to the Highlands, there is an implication that some respondents are at least interested in moving to the Highlands. Despite a great number of barriers to practicing the arts in the Highlands, Highland-based artists still have a desire to remain in the area to work. This is a sentiment that reflects the Directors' personal feelings, and is reassuring given VRC's company values.

As we move onto what is a large section of qualitative responses, I will first point out that, under each question, there is a great variety of responses, even when grouped into rough sentiments. To begin, this is indicative of the significant lack of infrastructure and opportunities in the Highlands as identified by the respondents. Though some of our respondents disagree, the majority of respondents do identify a number of barriers to performing arts access in the Highlands. A signifier of this need is that in QUESTION 11, over half of respondents stated that there were no opportunities in the Highlands for emerging artists (this was not 'only a few' or 'not enough' but specifically none). While other respondents could name a large number of organisations or groups that they felt (or assumed) do provide opportunities for local emerging artists, the 55% of respondents who disagree are symptomatic of either a severe lack of opportunities or a disconnect from the platforms that these opportunities use to reach people.

In terms of barriers, the top three barriers were identified as funding, lack of

opportunities and not knowing where to look for opportunities. Funding came up in response to multiple questions and in all cases was identified as a need / issue for more than one respondent. Thus, we have identified funding as a significant problem overall. There was a feeling that funding is concentrated in the central belt and one respondent went as far as to suggest that 'funders [are] not interested in Highland areas'. This is a very complicated issue that VRC Director, Laura, has seen emerge personally as a funding assessor / decision maker on the Nurturing Talent Fund with the NYAAG and the Youth Arts Bursaries with Creative Scotland. Unfortunately there isn't scope in this analysis to dive into these intricacies. VRC aims to provide creative opportunities in the Highlands in an effort to combat these feelings of dislocation and neglect. We hope that the parliamentary motion that was raised on our behalf will support our endeavour. Our decision to continue producing creative work (as opposed to focusing on facilitation and support) was a direct outcome from this survey. We are also working on establishing a network with other emerging companies to pool our resources and industry connections in the hope of making it easier for Highland-based artists to connect to opportunities in and beyond the Highlands. Partnering with organisations like DogStar, UHI, Eden Court and Lyth Arts Centre will also be beneficial and, at VRC, we will be working on developing a strategy for mediating relationships between local artists, arts organisations and opportunities. Other barriers that were identified were infrastructure issues: such as travel and geography. Since our conception, VRC has had a vision to reach out to Highland communities rather than expecting remote artists to travel to Inverness. We will make sure that our auditions and professional work push to combat this barrier by providing travel expenses, working online where possible, and connecting with other rural arts hubs so that VRC can travel to these areas.

Funding and paid work was the mode response in QUESTION 13, identified as a priority need for Highland-based artists. This was affirming to us at VRC as this is already a core company value. We pledge to make sure that our artists are paid well and that this is informed by national and international trends in fair pay for artists. Collaboration, local/professional companies, and opportunities to create new work were other repeated responses under this question. Firstly: we hope that our aim to develop a local and national network through our partnerships will help to provide opportunities for collaboration (both at an organisational and individual level). Secondly: as a

local, professional theatre company, we are glad to see that this need is recognised by others. Finally: we held a vision at the initial conception of VRC to facilitate the creation of new work by other emerging artists, independent of our own productions. We have made the decision to retain this ambition and to sow the seeds for its realisation in the next year, opposed to our original plan of waiting to integrate this until our 3-5 year plan.

Our final two questions interrogate the broader issue of Highlands arts and culture generally, but, upon reflection, we have decided that it is beyond the scope of this survey or our company to analyse this fully. The answers to these questions are generally reflective of the previous responses to our questions about barriers and opportunities. Thus, I will finalise my report on this survey by summarising the actions VRC aims to work towards here...

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOCUS GROUPS: We will begin to set up focus groups to gather more targeted and nuanced responses to our business plan.

PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS: We will be more careful about recognising, celebrating, and striving to improve the diversity of Highland Arts. This starts by identifying our demographic reach.

'emergence' AS A MATTER OF IDENTITY: We will decidedly leave the interpretation of emergence down to the individual to decide and will assess conflicts on a case-by-case basis.

A NETWORK: We will continue to develop plans for a local and national network of organisations and artists.

TRAVEL: We will create a plan to reach rural areas without an expectation that they will travel to Inverness for work. We will offer travel reimbursements, work online, and travel to these areas where possible.

PAID WORK: We will maintain our ethos of fair pay for artists and do our best to remain current on national and international trends.

FACILITATING NEW WORK: We will bring our plans to facilitate the development of work by local artists to the fore and begin work on this strand of the company now.

APPENDIX A


GLOSSARY OF TERMS

NYAAG (National Youth Arts Advisory Group - a Creative Scotland youth board, panel assessors for the Nurturing Talent Fund and representatives of the youth arts voice in Scotland)

Young people (people aged under 26 years old as defined by the Scottish Government)

APPENDIX B

FULL SURVEY



VIVID ROOTS COLLECTIVE

Section 1 of 3

Scottish Highlands and Emerging Artists

A few questions from VRC about you.

Do you live in the Highlands?

1. Yes
2. No

(If 'Yes' to the above) Where in the Highlands are you based?

Short answer text

Do you identify as an emerging artist?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unsure

How old are you?

Short answer text

What is your gender identity?

Short answer text

What is your occupation?

Short answer text

(If different to the above) What is your desired occupation?

Short answer text

Section 2 of 3

About Highland Arts and Emerging Artists



A few questions from VRC about you as a Highland artist.

Are you planning on remaining in / moving to the Highlands to practice in the creative industries?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unsure

Please explain the answer you gave to the previous question.

Long answer text

What kinds of opportunities are you aware of that support emerging artists in the Highlands? (if any)

Long answer text

What kind of barriers prevent you from accessing arts opportunities in the Highlands? (if any)

Long answer text



What kind of opportunities would you like to see more of in the Highlands?

Long answer text

In your opinion, what do you think are the issues with Highland arts and culture? (If any)

Long answer text

How do you think the Highlands can improve in arts and culture?

Long answer text

Section 3 of 3

Further Information



Description (optional)

About Vivid Roots Collective

We are a Highland-based theatre collective aiming to create professional theatre with a focus on local emerging artists. Through our creative practice, we aim to highlight social issues that affect the wider community. We are in our first year of operation and are using this time to become a registered charity and to perform market research. This year, we want to perform a selection of short plays to a digital audience, employing local artists in their delivery. We are now raising money for our artists' work; you can support our project here: <https://gofund.me/68bfb36b>.

Please provide your email address if you wish to stay up-to-date with VRC's activities by joining our mailing list.

Short answer text

Data Protection

What is the purpose of your information?: The information you provide here will be used by Vivid Roots Collective as market research. After processing, the responses will be collated in a visual and public report of the survey. Your response will be fully anonymous and any information that we interpret as sensitive will be removed or redacted.

Data handling: By submitting this survey, you are providing consent for us to use your responses (data) for the stated purpose. Your responses will only be held on this platform. They will not be downloaded onto any other device/platform/account. On the 13th August, all responses will be permanently erased.

Withdrawing your consent: You will be able to withdraw your response up to the 13th August. After this date, the survey data will be part of a complete published report and, therefore, will be uneditable. To withdraw your consent, please email contact.vividroots@gmail.com with the subject line: Survey Consent Withdrawal.

Have you read the Data Protection summary? *

☐ Yes

APPENDIX C

REFERENCES

Framework Theatre Company. (2021). *Building a Framework*. [Online]. [04 December 2021]. Available from: <<https://www.frameworktheatre.com/our-publications>>

2011. *Scotland's Census*. [Online]. [04 December 2021]. Available from<<https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/search-the-census#/explore/snapshot>>