



Community Feedback

BC Arts Council

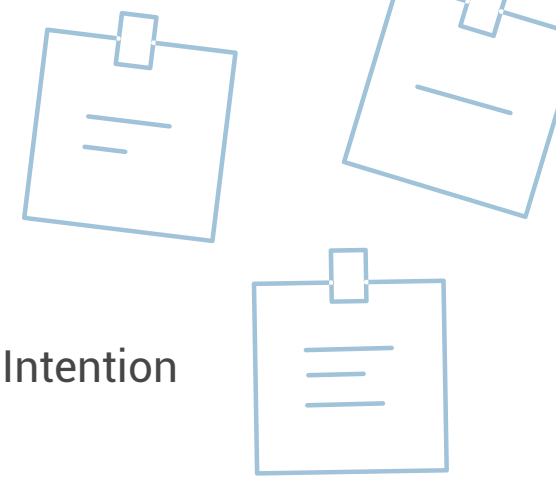
2022 Operating Assistance Application

Prepared by

Greater Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance

January 10, 2023

Table of Contents



2	Table of Contents	20	Perception of BC Arts Council's Intention
3	Backgrounder		
4	Report Considerations		
	Executive Summary		Designated Priority Group and Equity Data Tool
5	Introduction	21	Why some didn't complete it
6 - 11	Reflections	22 - 23	What they appreciated
12 - 14	Requests and Considerations	24 - 26	Challenges they experienced
	Who Responded		Application
15	Region	27 - 29	What they appreciated
16	Priority Groups	30 - 32	Challenges they experienced
17	Grant Writing Experience		
18 - 19	Program Stream		



Backgrounder

Based on anecdotal input from members of B.C.'s arts and culture community, GVPTA, in collaboration with a group of B.C. arts service organizations, developed and disseminated a survey to better understand and identify common experiences with the BC Arts Council's Operating Assistance grant program with the September 15, 2022 application deadline. The objective of the survey was to convey to the BC Arts Council community feedback about the most recent application process to consider as they continue to make updates to their programs to align with their *Extending Foundations: Action Plan 2022-2024*.

Who was invited to complete the survey?

- Organizational representatives who applied for the 2022 BC Arts Council Operating Assistance grant;
- Organizational representatives who considered applying, however—for whatever reason—did not submit an application.

The survey link was distributed through a network of arts service organizations across British Columbia, via social media, newsletters, and by direct email outreach to publicly listed/reported recipients of BC Arts Council operating funding in 2021-22.

Online survey responses were collected between October 4-24, 2022.

Arts service organizations that collaborated on the survey development included: Arts BC, BC Alliance for Arts + Culture, BC Museums Association, BC Touring Council, CADA/West, Craft Council of BC, Le Conseil culturel et artistique francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, and Heritage BC.

Data collection, analysis, and reporting of the survey results was led by GVPTA.

Report Considerations

- We acknowledge that the survey was only conducted online and in English.
- As with any survey, this data is only a partial representation of the experiences of survey respondents and other grant applicants.
- Funded recipients of 2021-22 BC Arts Council Operating grants were directly invited by email by GVPTA to complete the survey. A list of grant funding recipients can be found on the BC Arts Council website at www.bcartscouncil.ca/funding/recipients/.
- The survey invitation was distributed by GVPTA and collaborating arts service organizations to their respective members and networks. Survey respondents, their respective disciplines and indications of funding streams represented in this report correlate with those who had access to the survey link and the capacity to participate. The data is not necessarily representative of the experience of all 2021-22 Operating grant recipients or all Operating grant applicants.

- This report uses “IDB” (Indigenous People - First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit; Deaf or those who experience disability; and Black or people of colour), three of the Designated Priority Groups classified by the BC Arts Council, to represent organizations with a mandate or purpose to support one or more of the IDB groupings. This also includes organizations with at least one writer of the application who identifies as one or more of the IDB groupings (this was not a criteria for BCAC Designated Priority Groups.)

Additional Notes

- Most questions within the survey were optional. Data in this report notes the number of responses (“n”) for the question or response option.
- Most questions were open-ended, producing narrative responses which GVPTA analyzed and grouped accordingly by common theme.
- Only one completed survey per organization was accepted.

Questions about the survey or report can be directed to GVPTA executive director, Kenji Maeda at kenji@gvpta.ca.

Executive Summary

We (GVPTA and our ASO colleagues) embarked on this research because of an unprecedented number of unsolicited comments from the community about BC Arts Council's September 2022 Operating Assistance application. While we encouraged members of our community to give direct feedback to BCAC, we recognize that not everyone is comfortable (for various reasons) contacting BCAC directly to offer feedback.

We recognize that BCAC is in the midst of their Extending Foundations: Action Plan 2022-2024 where Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Access are core to their strategic vision.

This report is an offer to BCAC, and potentially other interested grant makers, as one opportunity to hear from the arts, culture, and heritage sector, to reflect on and strengthen their programs moving forward.

This executive summary is a reflection through the lens of the research lead, GVPTA executive director, Kenji Maeda, whose experience includes equity-centred community conversations and consultations.

Respondent Overview

Over the course of three weeks (Oct 2-24, 2022), we received 181 responses from arts, culture, and heritage organizations from across British Columbia about their recent experience with the BC Arts Council's Operating Assistance application. Of those responses, 175 applied to one of the nine program streams, and six did not submit an application.

A quarter of the responses came from folks who applied for the Community Arts Organization program stream, another quarter were applicants of the Performing Arts Organizations stream. I should note that although nearly 50% of the responses came from two of nine program streams, which may seem disproportionate, those also represent the two largest Operating Assistance streams. When comparing the number of 2021-2022 Operating Assistance recipients for each program stream to the number of survey respondents for the same (or similar) streams, almost all program streams had 50% or more respondents. *See pages 18 and 19 for a breakdown of respondents by program stream.

Executive Summary, continued

Let's get to the core of this report!

The report provides further details on the perceptions, appreciations and challenges experienced by community members for the application itself, along with the application portal's Designated Priority Group and Equity Data Tool.

What I share below are covered in four sections:

- Intention - an overview of what people thought were the intentions behind the changes made by BC Arts Council.
- Positive Reflections - highlight of positive themes that emerged from all parts of the process.
- Challenges based on common themes.
- Requests and Considerations - instead of regurgitating a list of complaints or challenges (you can read those highlights on the other pages), this section is framed as requests and considerations to move into action.

As the questions were primarily open-ended, what emerged in their responses are the themes that were top of mind. While some themes have a high percentage of mentions, it doesn't mean themes that have fewer mentions are less important or less valuable to consider.

Intention

What was clear across the responses is that most people had a common understanding of *why* BC Arts Council chose to make changes to the program. There was broad appreciation for that intention.

When asked to put in their own words why they thought the changes were made, 74% reflected on aspects of the BCAC strategic priorities, specifically mentioning the *Extending Foundations: Action Plan*, a commitment to reconciliation, making applications more accessible and equitable, supporting EDIA practices, shifting the funding resources to be more equitable, and supporting rural communities.

Other folks felt the changes were to meet objectives that were more politically motivated, and a handful also expressed that they were made simply to "make it more difficult" for organizations to access funds.



Executive Summary, continued

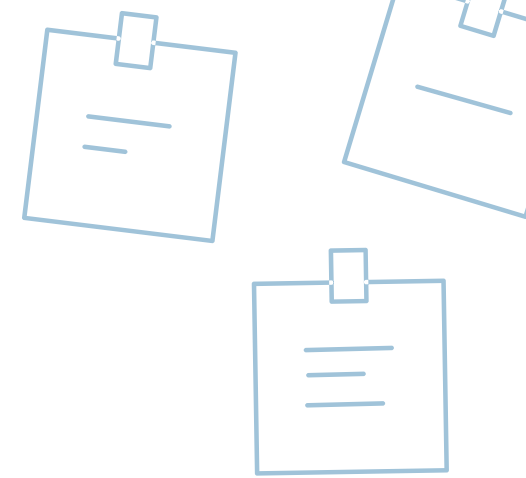
Positive Reflections

Respondents shared that they appreciated that rural and equity-deserving communities were being recognized and prioritized. What stood out was that when asked specifically about the Designated Priority Groups and the Equity Data Tool, rural respondents (61%) expressed their appreciation, almost double than their non-rural colleagues (31%), and when asked about the application itself, a higher percentage of non-IDB respondents (57%) mentioned *intention* as something they appreciated, compared to their IDB (45%) colleagues.

Many people noted that BCAC Program Advisors were responsive, knowledgeable, and helpful, especially while navigating the changes to the program. The info session was appreciated, both for the opportunity to get an overview and ask questions during the live session, and access to the recording for those who missed the live event.

Some folks shared that this year's application process gave them pause or an opportunity to reflect on their organization's values, commitments, and programming in a way that may not have been done in previous years.

There was a sense of hope or opportunity that the data collection through this new process could be useful as a long-term strategy for change in the sector, whether as an accountability tool, or to measure and track benchmarks for future initiatives.



Executive Summary, continued

Guidelines and Deadlines

Guidelines were specifically mentioned by 35% of respondents, including clear guidelines and the fact that the portal was opened earlier for their program stream compared to previous years, which allowed for additional time to prepare. There was also specific appreciation with the return to multi-year funding.

Nearly one-third expressed the change of deadline made it more challenging. This includes the shift of approximately two weeks from the end of September for some program streams, and moving the deadline by 6 months for those streams that previously applied in the spring.

While recognizing the positive intention of moving the deadline away from September 30 (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation), the earlier date proved challenging for organizations that typically have summer programming, annual holidays, or individuals who are impacted by the start of the school year. For many, this year's more complex application process exacerbated the feeling of a deadline crunch.



Executive Summary, continued

Online Platform

40% of respondents shared that they appreciated features of the online platform that allowed them to prepare more efficiently and effectively, specifically auto-save, multiple users on the account, and storing of organizational details that could be used for future applications.

The most common challenge experienced with the platform was related to the table-based data, specifically the Budget and Stats (for applicable program streams), and Activity Summaries tables. The tables were not as responsive as respondents would like, and the additional labour required to enter the data, for some, took hours. The hope is that there could be more efficient and flexible ways of inputting data, for example, through uploading existing CSV or Excel files, and a more user-friendly interface.

Internal Challenges

While the opportunity to reflect on the questions were mentioned as a positive for a handful of respondents, internal challenges was mentioned by almost half (44%) of respondents.

Not only was additional time and labour required for this year's application, organizations facing labour shortages, financial precarity, and the expectation there would likely be no increases to operating grants experienced greater difficulties in applying.

Some expressed that they felt they didn't have the experience or expertise to respond to equity-focused questions, while others also shared their challenges planning for an uncertain "post-pandemic" future.



Executive Summary, continued

Application Questions

One in five respondents shared that they appreciated the type of questions being asked and that the word count encouraged brevity. They appreciated that audio and video responses were accepted for some of the questions, and having downloadable questions helped for preparation.

While there were some positive reflections, the theme of application questions also had the highest volume (73%) of criticism, questions, and concerns.

There was common frustration that the application questions felt repetitive and disproportionately focus on equity when compared to the assessment criteria, with inadequate opportunity to speak to the organization's artistic practices, programming, and activities. There was a feeling that they were "checking boxes to show how EDI we are," which was expressed as tokenistic and reductive by some, and

also felt that the increase in complex and nuanced questions combined with the available word count created challenges to adequately offer their responses.

There was considerable confusion and conflating of the terms "Designated Priority Groups" and "Equity-deserving communities". Based on the responses, my perception is that even though "Designated Priority Groups" and "Equity Data Tool" was specifically for the organization profile, it impacted the responses for the application questions related to "equity-deserving communities."

Multiple respondents, exclusively Community Arts, found the budget portion of the application a challenge – whether difficulty aligning with internal financial categories, or the labour entering in the data.



Executive Summary, continued

Designated Priority Group Questionnaire and Equity Data Tool

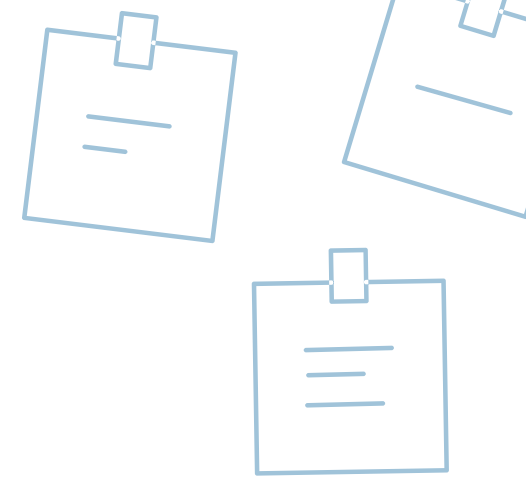
The overall sentiment was that the rationale for this was positive, as it recognized groups and communities that have been systemically and disproportionately excluded, under-resourced, and underrepresented. For some respondents, it opened up opportunities for self-reflection, and there was also an expression of hope for how the data could be used for future change.

Similar to the application questions, the most concern and challenge was related to the questions and how their responses would be interpreted. There was discomfort and feeling “intrusive” with asking staff, board, and artists to disclose personal information (eg. race, gender, sexuality, etc) for the purposes of the grant. There was also considerable challenge to calculate the 51% threshold, without further guidance.

Respondents questioned how privacy laws and HR policies would impact what can be disclosed and what assurances they would need from BC Arts Council to share that information. While names of individuals might not be disclosed, some had concerns that aggregate stats from small organizations (one or two staff) would unintentionally be personally identifiable.

Sections that included both regional considerations along with other equity-deserving communities proved to be challenging as some respondents shared that the challenges faced by rural organizations are distinct from organizations led by and serving equity-deserving community members.

Some respondents questioned how the priority groups were determined and why other marginalized and equity-deserving communities were not included.



Executive Summary, continued

Requests and Considerations

The following are a list of requests and considerations for BC Arts Council, in no particular order.

Application Deadline and Timeline

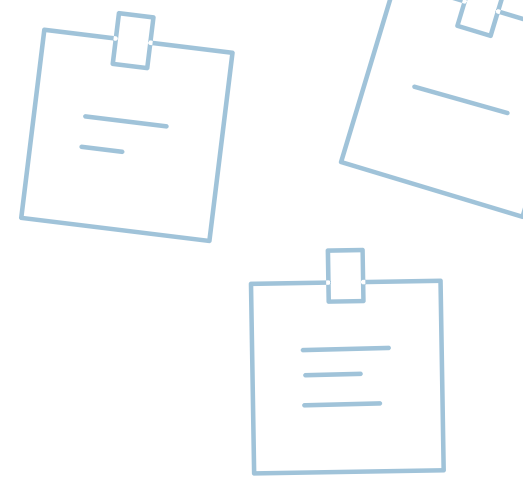
- Is there an opportunity to extend the deadline, while not impacting the day or days leading up to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation?
- Could the deadline generally be more flexible? Possibly a rolling intake over a period of time?
- Open the application portal earlier.

Organizational Profile

- How can we leverage the Organizational Profile to ease the workload? What other aspects could be included so only minor updates might be required for future applications?

Support

- How might BCAC support organizations that are ready to move with Council's strategic plan, but have limited capacity, resources, and expertise?
- Could there be additional FAQs or an application guide that gives examples of how to interpret the application questions based on different contexts, and in relation to the assessment criteria?
- Could BCAC offer grant writing workshops or other professional development resources to assist applicants?
- If the application is assessed differently compared to previous years, what support does BCAC provide long-time applicants to better understand the changes?



Executive Summary, continued

Requests and Considerations, continued

Application Questions and Structure

- Expand the option for oral and video submissions for other parts of the application.
- Could the application include flexibility for different ways of responding by text? For example, the option to have separate questions with shorter responses, or combined questions with longer response fields for organizations that prefer a more narrative response.
- Could the word count be reflective of the complexity or nuance of the questions being asked?
- How might questions be asked differently for organizations that are equity-led, versus those that are not?
- How might questions be asked differently for organizations based in non-urban vs urban regions of the province?
- Could there be a simplified application process for equity-deserving groups, priority groups, or requests under a certain amount?

- Do all questions need to be asked of all applicants?
- How can the platform's conditional and validating questions effectively be used to make the application more accessible and straight forward?
- Reduce the number of "or" questions and sub-questions per field, in order to reduce confusion.
- Request: Add question numbers to assist with preparing the application.
- Request: Use plain language for all parts of the application.

Community Engagement

- Consult with the community more when making sweeping changes. Offer focus groups to assess the questions.
- When making sweeping changes, how might BCAC better engage the community to create buy-in?

Executive Summary, continued

Requests and Considerations, continued

Equity Data Collection

- How will BCAC better support and practice informed consent data collection with organizations, and how will BCAC support those organizations working with their team?
- Provide transparency for how data will be used now and in the future. This will help build trust with the community.
- Equity-deserving communities generally recognize the role that data can play to advance equity goals and make change, but consultation, care, and a clear plan from the source of the data collection to its intended use is required.

Table-based data

- Include an option to upload content, rather than manual entry.
- Add an option to move rows or insert rows anywhere in the table.

Other Considerations

- If there are changes to the applications, take into consideration the additional time and labour for applicants to adjust to those changes.
- How could BCAC address the need to support non-urban and equity-deserving communities, while also supporting existing organizations ready and eager to centre EDI in their organization and programming?
- Provide more clarity for the community to better understand the pathway to accessing operating grants.
- Could multi-year grants be expanded to three years?



Who Responded?

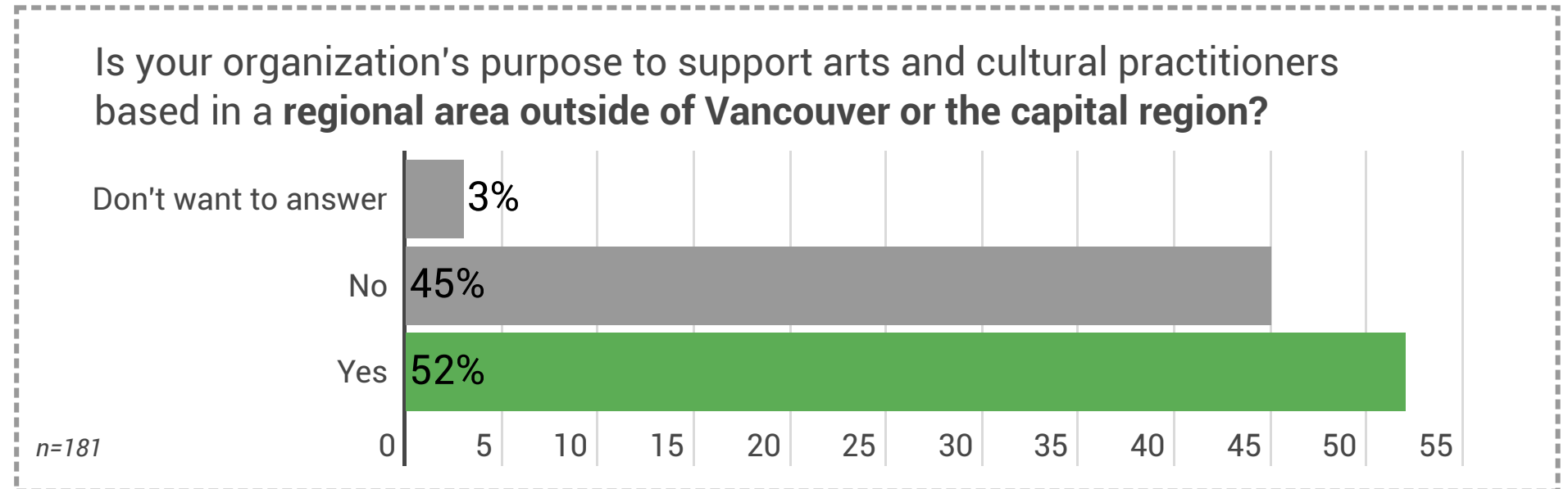
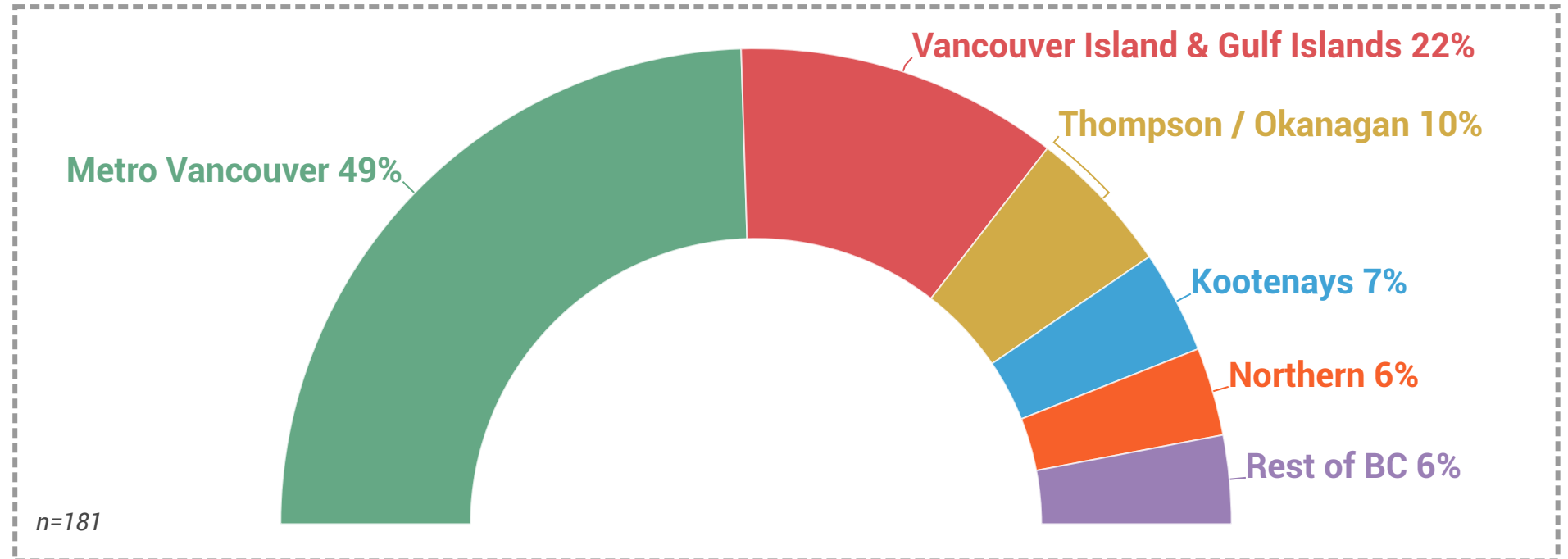
By Region in BC



What we see

Of the 181 responses received, the region in BC with the most respondents was **Metro Vancouver (49%)**, followed by **Vancouver Island & Gulf Islands region (22%)**.

52% of the respondents identified their organization's purpose as one that supports arts and culture practitioners in areas outside of Vancouver and the capital region.



Who Responded?

Priority Groups



What we see

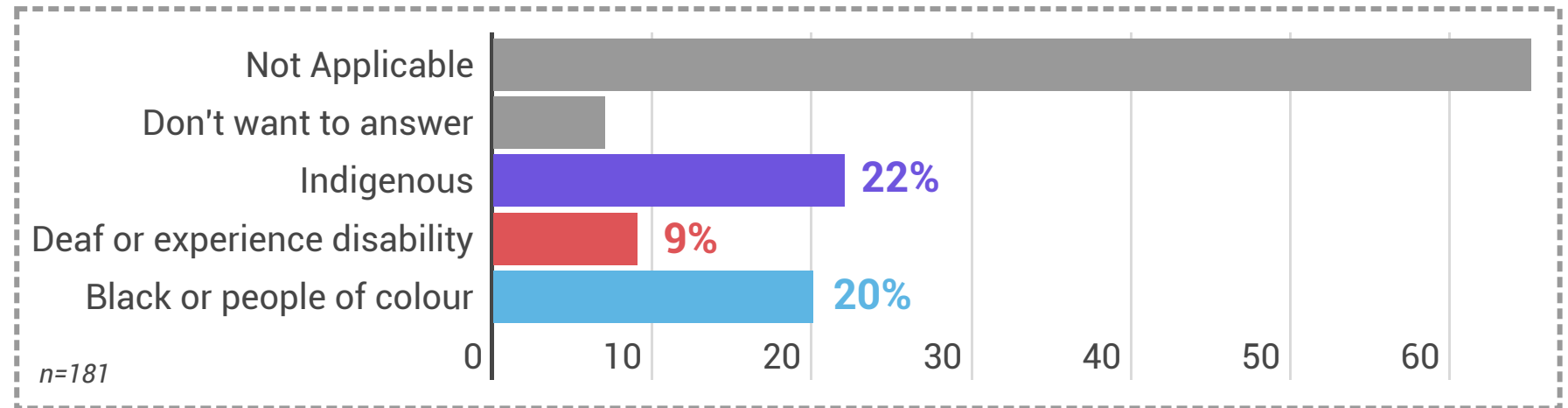
Of the respondents who indicate their mandate or purpose is to support practitioners from specific priority groups, **22%** support those who are **Indigenous**, **20%** who are **Black or people of colour**, and **9%** who are **Deaf or experience disability**.

Some organizations had one or more individuals who wrote the grant application who identified as **Indigenous (10%)**, **Black or people of colour (23%)**, or **Deaf or experience disability (6%)**

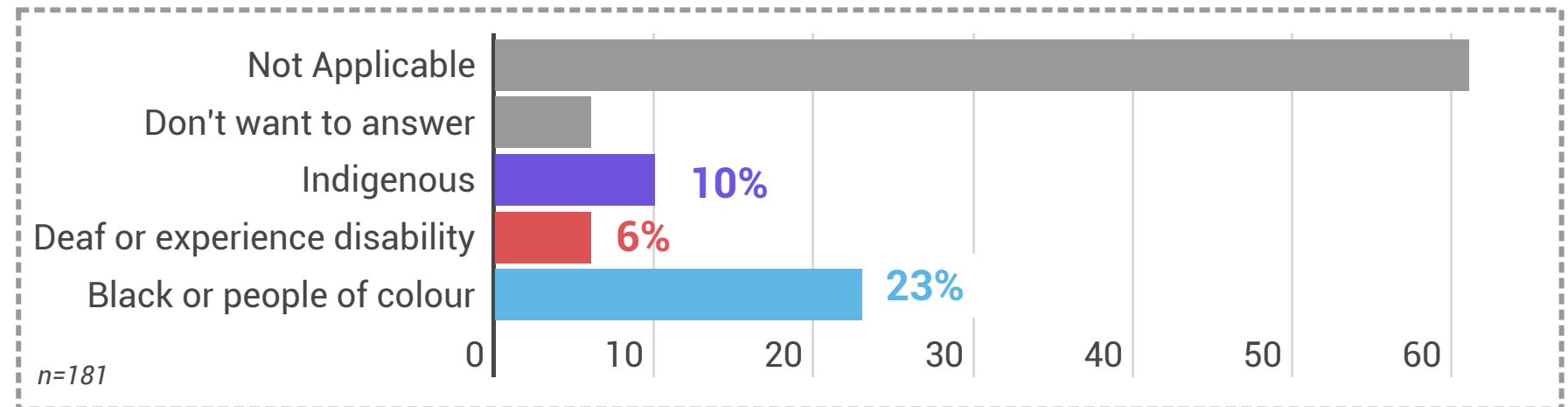


*Note: Application writers were not asked to disclose this by BCAC. This question was asked for this report for the purpose of better understanding the respondents of the survey.

Is your **organization's mandate or purpose** to support arts and cultural practitioners from any of the following BCAC designated priority groups?



Do one or more **people who wrote the application** identify as any of the following BCAC designated priority groups? **!***



Who Responded?



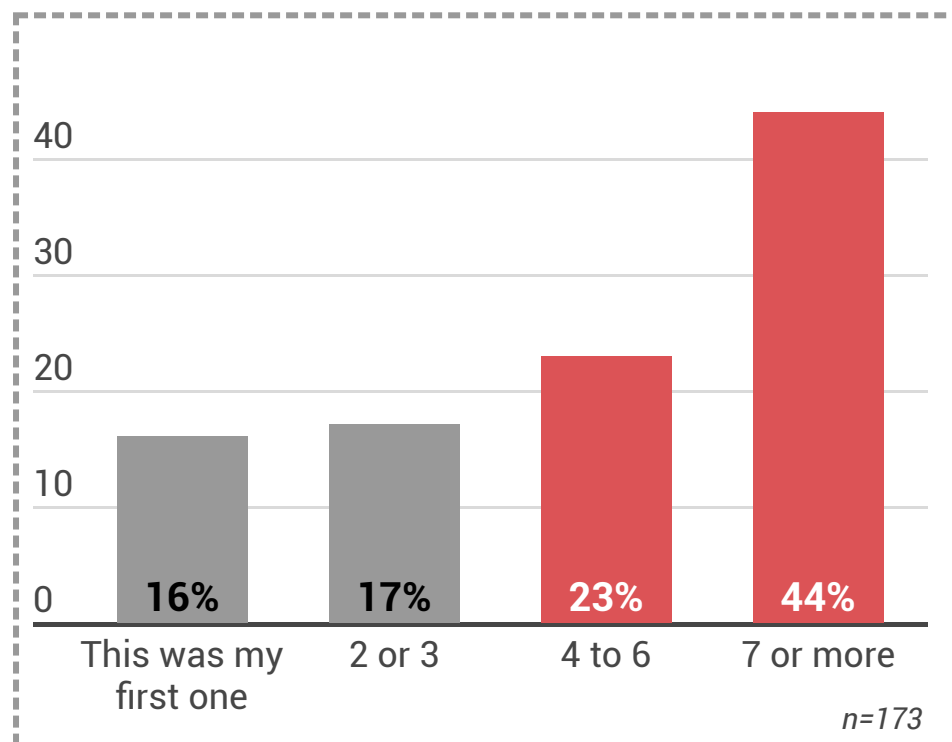
What we see

Two-thirds of respondents (67%) have experience writing four or more BC Arts Council operating grants.

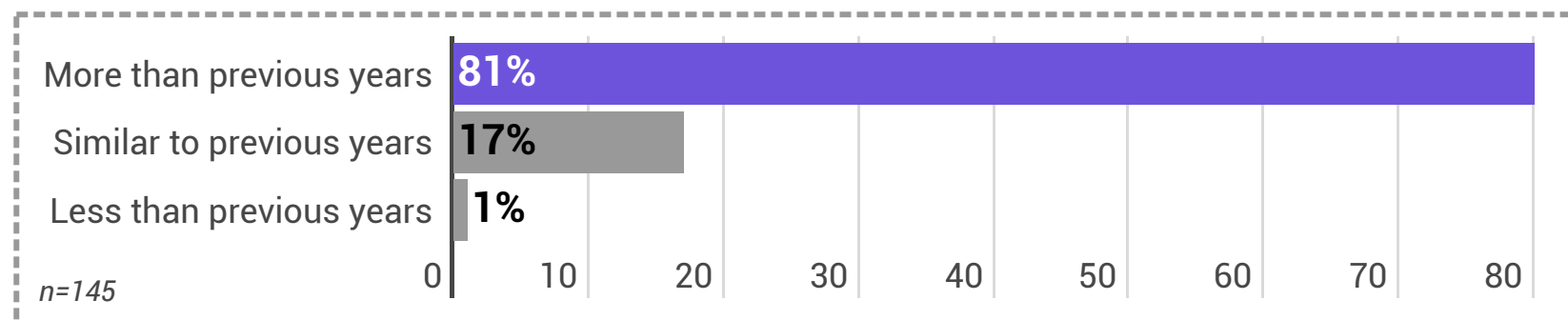
Of the **81%** of respondents who said they spent **more time** writing this year's grant compared to previous years, **one-third (34%)** spent 25 to 50 percent more time, nearly **1 in 5 (19%)** spent 50 to 75 percent more time, and **1 in 5 (20%)** put in at least double the amount of time.

Grant Writing

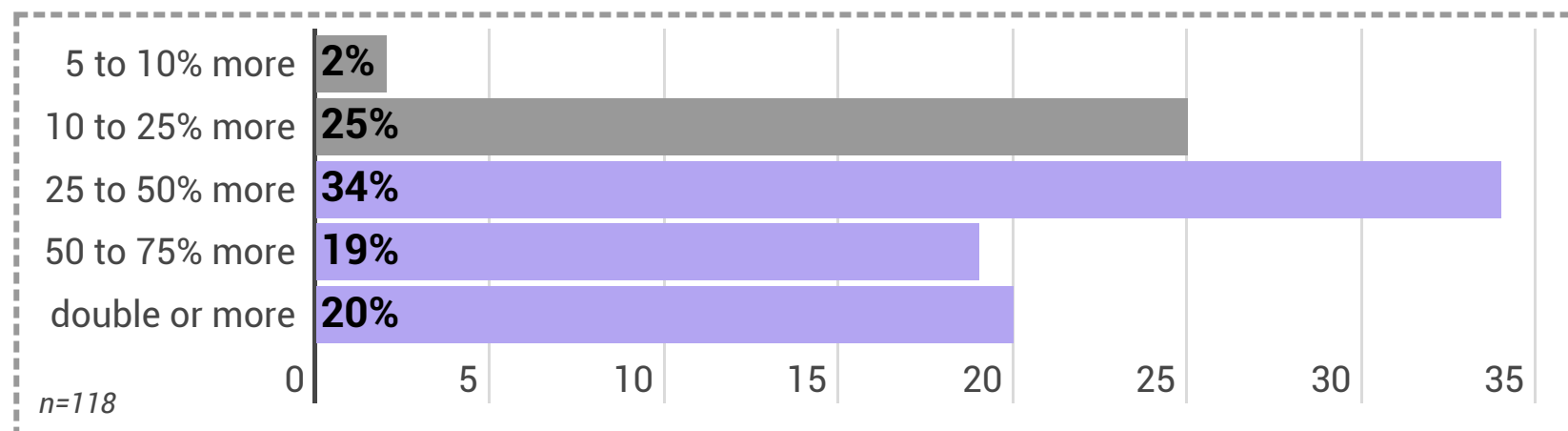
How many BC Arts Council operating grants do you personally have **experience writing or submitting?**



Compared to previous BCAC operating grants you've written, did you spend **more or less time** preparing this year's grant?



Approximately **how much MORE time** did you spend preparing this year's grant, compared to previous years?



Who Responded?

By Program Stream

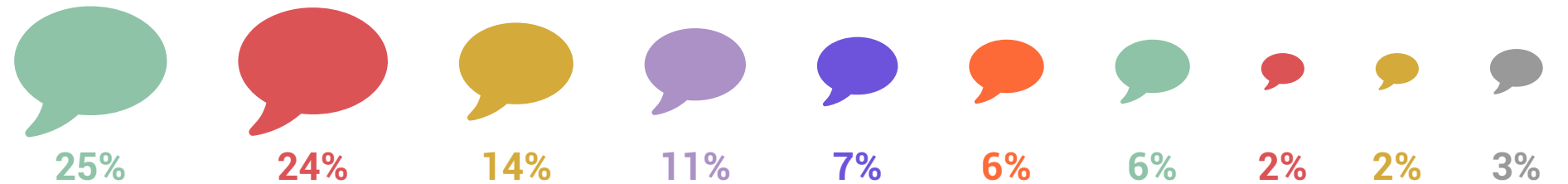
Which BC Arts Council Operating Assistance grant, with a deadline of September 15, 2022, did you apply to?

What we see

Of the 181 responses received, the program streams that had the most number of respondents were the **Community Arts Organizations** and **Performing Arts Organizations**.

While the number of respondents are higher, this can be attributed to a higher number of applicants for those program streams. See the next page to see the percentage of respondents compared to grant recipients in 2021-2022.

- Community Arts Organization
- Performing Arts Organizations
- Visual Arts and Media Arts Organizations
- Public Museums and Indigenous Cultural Centres
- Professional Arts Festivals
- Arts & Cultural Service Organization
- Book Publishers
- Professional Arts Training Organization
- Literary Arts
- Not applicable (didn't apply)



n=181

Who Responded? By Program Stream

Comparing the number of Operating Assistance recipients in 2021-2022 to the number of survey respondents

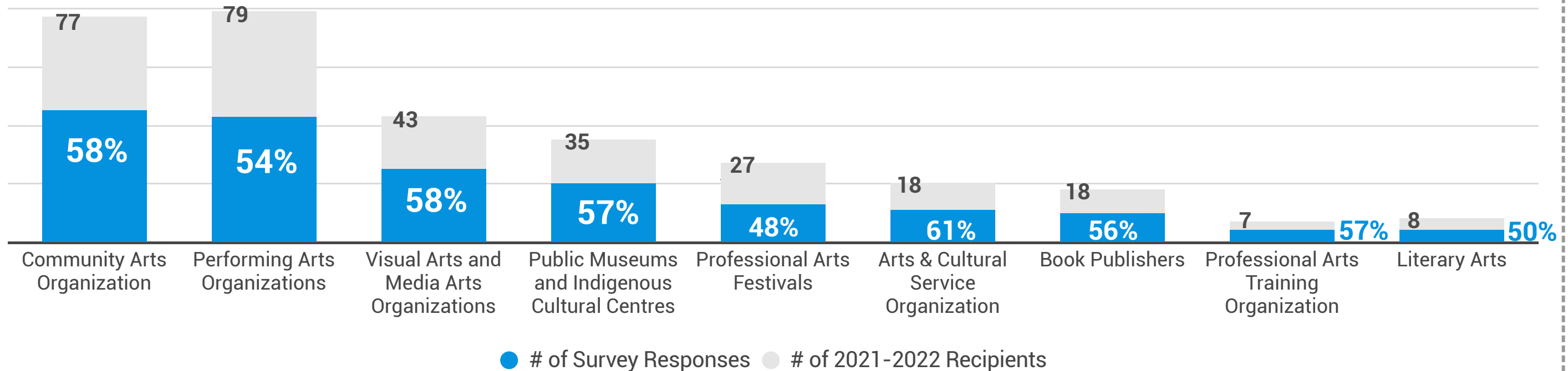
What we see

We compared the number of 2021-2022 Operating Assistance recipients to the number of survey respondents who applied for the same or similar program stream this year. What this shows is the response rate, based on program streams, is mostly 50% or higher. For example, there were 77 Community Arts grant recipients in 2021-2022, and we received 44 responses from Community Arts applicants, a 58% response rate for that program stream.

2021-2022 grant recipient list can be found on the BC Arts Council website www.bcartscouncil.ca/funding/recipients

Some program streams listed below include a comparison based on updates to stream names and combination of multiple streams. For clarity on how we interpreted the changes: Literary Arts (previously Arts Periodicals); Performing Arts Organizations (combination of Music, Dance, and Theatre.)

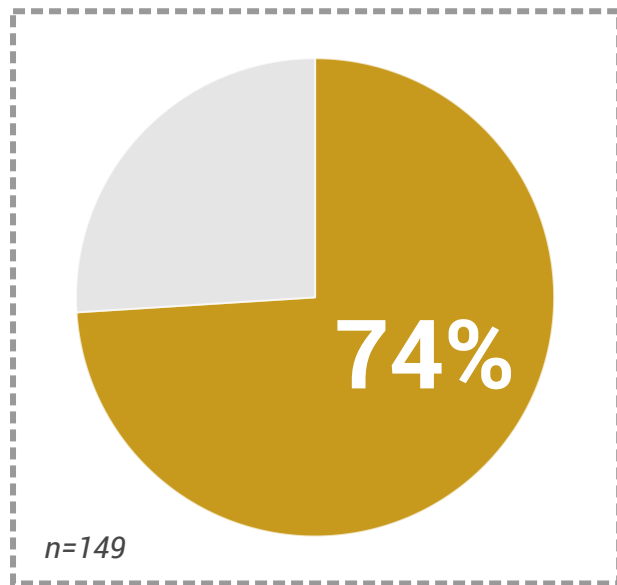
Note: This chart specifically compares the number of grant recipients versus survey respondents who were grant applicants; the number of applicants in 2021-2022 is not available.



BC Arts Council's Intention

In your own words, in one sentence, what is your understanding of why the BC Arts Council made updates to the grant program?

I think BC Arts Council's Operating Grant application and guidelines were updated to / so / because...



📌 What we heard

74% of respondents ended the sentence with various aspects that are related to the BC Arts Council's strategic priorities. Some specifically mentioned the *Extending Foundations Action Plan* or Designated Priority Groups, others also mentioned supporting EDI practices, equitable distribution of funds, demonstration of BCAC's commitment to reconciliation, making the application process more accessible and equitable, and support for rural communities.

Other responses included the ability to increase accountability among grantees; BCAC trying to catch up to the inclusivity and representation of society; to meet government and political objectives, distinct from Council's objectives; and for a few, to specifically make it more difficult for organizations to access funds.

” **Focus the application on the BCAC's strategic priorities.**

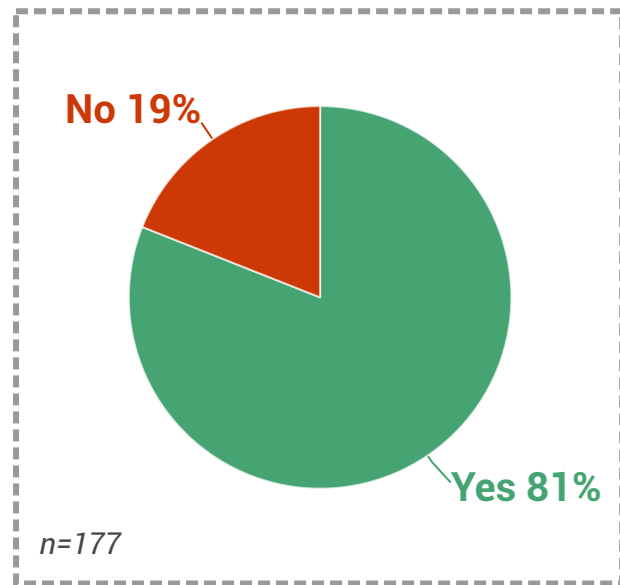
” **Respond to the sociocultural shifts and urgencies of the contemporary moment.**

” **Recalibrate program priorities in line with more meaningful commitments to equity, access and social justice.**

” **To make it more difficult [...] under the guise of equity diversification.**

Designated Priority Group and Equity Data Tool

Did you complete the Designated Priority Groups Questionnaire or Equity Data Tool in your organizational profile?



What we heard

While the majority of respondents completed the optional Designated Priority Groups Questionnaire or Equity Data Tool, **19%** responded they did not.

The most common reason for not completing was the lack of capacity to complete it, often in relation to an already more taxing application process.

Others mentioned they were uncomfortable with answering the questions, were confused by the questions, didn't agree with the data collection method, or didn't have the data to share.

Some also mentioned that they were not eligible for equity-based funding so did not see the value of completing this extra work.

“ [We do] not routinely track the kind of information necessary to answer most of the questions.

“ The “51%” requirement was vague.

“ It was optional and we were busy enough with the application.

“ We embrace progressive social values [...] but we are not comfortable with the BCAC assuming the role of morality police.

“ The Equity Data Tool is discriminatory and does not align with the non-racial aims of our organization.

Designated Priority Group and Equity Data Tool Appreciation

What aspects of the Designated Priority Groups Questionnaire or Equity Data Tool **did you appreciate?**



52% Recognition of priority groups

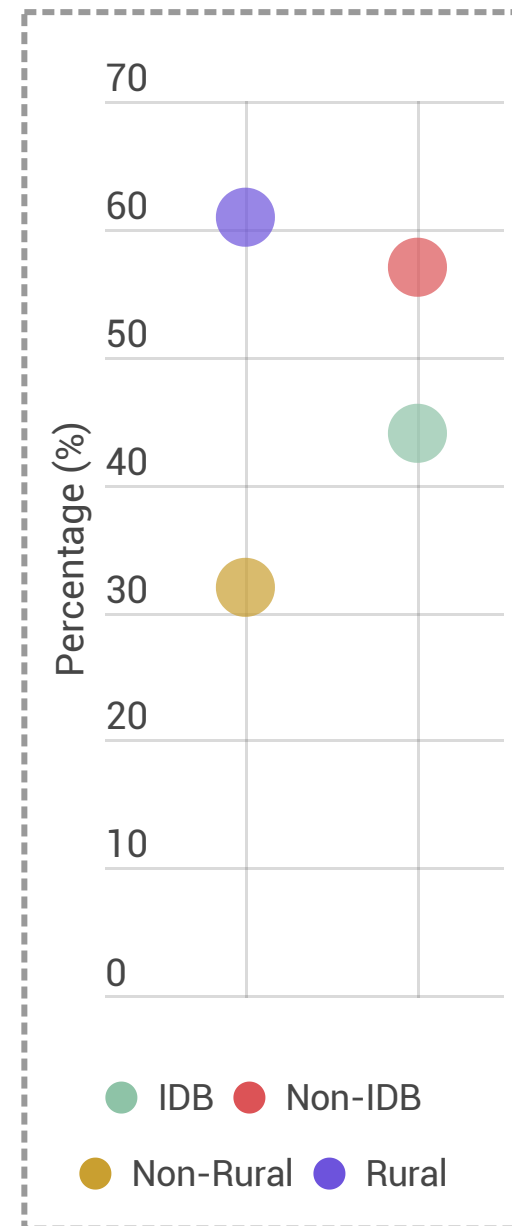
n=97

What we heard

52% of respondents shared an appreciation that rural and equity-deserving communities were being recognized and prioritized.

“ I appreciated that the BCAC is serious about ensuring that meaningful change is occurring throughout the sector.

“ Its very existence is enormously appreciated. It makes the old guard very nervous.



What we see

A higher percentage of **Rural respondents (61%)** mentioned the theme of recognizing priority groups as something they appreciated, versus **31% of Non-Rural respondents**.

There was a higher percentage of **Non-IDB respondents (57%)** specifically citing an appreciation for recognizing equity communities than **IDB respondents (45%)**.

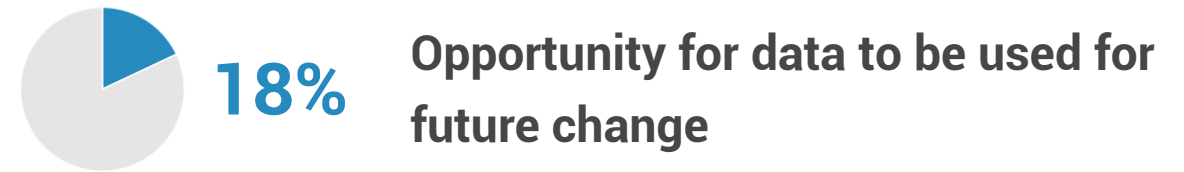
! For the purposes of this report, "Rural" is used to identify organizations that support arts and cultural practitioners based in a regional area outside of Vancouver or the Capital Region. (See page 15 for the geographic breakdown of respondents)

"IDB" includes organizations with a mandate to support, or an application writer, who identifies as: Indigenous; Deaf or those who experience disability; or Black or people of colour). See page 4 for "IDB" definition.

Designated Priority Group and Equity Data Tool

Appreciation

What aspects of the Designated Priority Groups Questionnaire or Equity Data Tool **did you appreciate**?



📌 What we heard

24% of respondents shared that going through the questions and the tool gave them an opportunity to reflect on their organization's current and potential commitments and strategies.

📌 What we heard

18% of respondents shared different aspects that data can play to strengthen equitable practices, including benchmarking and tracking progress over time, and potential for organizational transparency.

“ I think putting numbers to people's commitments to diversity is an important piece of accountability.

“ I appreciated this tool, and it helped me understand the organization as we are, and where we're going.

“ I think this is important to determine who is doing DEI work and how DEI work is happening in the BC arts community.

“ I appreciate that the effort is being taken by a key funder to acknowledge and improve EDI in the sector.

Designated Priority Group and Equity Data Tool Challenges

What aspects of the Designated Priority Groups Questionnaire or Equity Data Tool **did you find challenging?**



What we heard

61% of respondents shared challenges related to the questions and response types. Many people felt the questions required the person filling out the form to make assumptions about their board, staff, artists, and others within their organization. They felt uncomfortable putting people into "checkboxes," feeling like

the questions were "intrusive" or were unsure what level of consent they required in order to share details with BCAC.

The percentage threshold was cited as challenging to calculate without additional clarity or guidance, along with confusion differentiating Designated Priority Groups and Equity-Deserving.

“ The very definition of Equity seemed confusing. As a rural community, are we one hundred percent equity deserving?

“ It feels strange to essentially be reduced to numbers and percentages.

“ Worried and nervous about our lack of data for a number of questions.

“ I don't feel that the tool actually allowed for the real, complex nature of how companies work with diversity.

“ Questions did not capture our full story.

“ Categories can be reductive and tokenising.

Designated Priority Group and Equity Data Tool Challenges

What aspects of the Designated Priority Groups Questionnaire or Equity Data Tool **did you find challenging?**



20% The intended use of the data

n=104

📌 What we heard

20% of respondents shared they were unsure about who would have access to the data and how the data will be used for funding decisions, through what criteria, and how it would impact (positively or negatively) their operating or other funding applications to BC Arts Council.

Some questioned how privacy laws and HR policies would impact what can be disclosed and what assurances they would need from BC Arts Council to share that information. While names of individuals are not disclosed, concerns that general stats from smaller organizations (1 or 2 staff) would unintentionally reveal personal information.



It is unclear in what way the information will be used by the BCAC in relation to evaluating organizations and projects eligibility for funding.



BCAC should not be asking for this information without offering clear guidelines on how [data collection] should be handled internally in an organization.



Even though we met the identified threshold- we're not sure the data will actually be considered or how it will affect our status, be measured or applied moving forward.

Designated Priority Group and Equity Data Tool

Challenges

What aspects of the Designated Priority Groups Questionnaire or Equity Data Tool **did you find challenging?**

Additional things we heard

Sections that included both regional equity along with the other equity communities proved to be challenging as some respondents shared that the challenges faced by rural organizations are distinct from organizations led by equity-deserving community members.

Some questioned why other communities were not included as a Designated Priority Group, including Jewish people, people who experience homelessness, 2SLGBTQAI+, etc...

Other responses included: the additional labour to complete; repetition with questions found in the application; stats for smaller organizations can be skewed with the change of one person; equity-led and equity-practiced organizations might not feel comfortable saying the organization itself "identifies" or is "dedicated" to one of the Designated Priority Groups.

“ It was not clear in every question whether region was included in the definition of equity. Its inclusion / exclusion was indicated only some of the time.

“ While it's nice to be given extra consideration as a regional organization, I don't believe it should actually be a priority group alongside Indigenous, etc...

“ There was no way to indicate that we serve artists from all equity-deserving communities but we do not specifically target those communities so it gave the impression that we are part of the problem not the solution.

“ Why are LGBTQ folks left out of the BCAC Designated Priority Groups?

Application: Appreciation

Considering all components of this year's application (eg. program guidelines, deadline, questions, format, word counts, grant platform, labour and prep time), **what aspects did you appreciate?**



40% System and online portal

n=143



35% Program Guidelines

n=143

What we heard


The online platform was the most mentioned aspect being appreciated.

Specifically the various features available to them, including auto-save to reduce lost work; the ability to add multiple users to the account to share grant writing responsibility with other members of their organization; general ease-of-use and navigation of the platform; and storing of organizational details to be used for subsequent applications with minimal updating required.

What we heard

35% mentioned different facets of the Guidelines, most of whom shared they felt the guidelines were clear, even though there was a lot to go through.

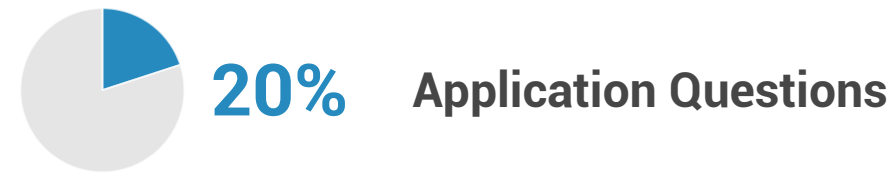
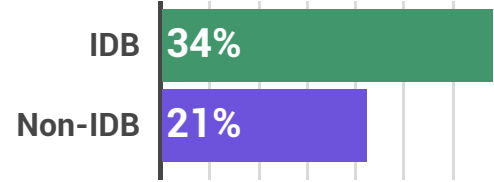
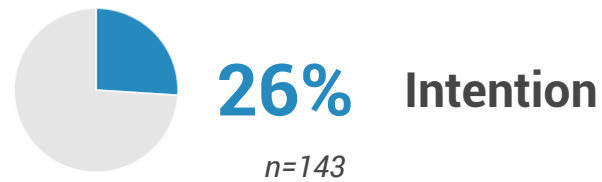
Some respondents appreciated that the application portal was opened earlier for their program stream compared to previous years, which allowed for additional time to prepare. And there was an appreciation with the return to multi-year funding.

 I really like that it stores your organizational info so that you just update it every year.

 Comprehensive program guidelines were excellent.

Application: Appreciation

Considering all components of this year's application (eg. program guidelines, deadline, questions, format, word counts, grant platform, labour and prep time), **what aspects did you appreciate?**



📌 What we heard

With **26%** of respondents, they appreciated that the intention for the changes to the application and process was to be more inclusive for equity-deserving communities, and/or regions outside of Vancouver and Capital Region.

A higher percentage (**34%**) of **IDB** respondents mentioned *intention* as something they appreciated, versus **21%** of **non-IDB** respondents.

📌 What we heard

20% responded favourably to aspects of the application questions.

This included the type of questions being asked, word count to encourage brevity, ability and ease of including additional web resources and links, access to a downloadable version of the questions, and the opportunity to submit audio/video responses for some of the questions.

! "IDB" includes organizations with a mandate to support, or an application writer, who identifies as: Indigenous; Deaf or those who experience disability; or Black or people of colour). See page 4 for "IDB" definition.

” I appreciated the emphasis on EDI. About time. A white arts leader mentioned how progressive BCAC seemed. I'm brown so I'm not as blown away. I encourage caution and self-reflection.

” Word counts seemed realistic and not overwhelming.

” The new guidelines and application questions were a positive evolution.

Application: Appreciation

Considering all components of this year's application (eg. program guidelines, deadline, questions, format, word counts, grant platform, labour and prep time), **what aspects did you appreciate?**



n=143



n=143

What we heard

Support and guidance offered by the BC Arts Council was mentioned by **14%** of respondents. The specific support, knowledge, and responsiveness from Program Advisors was a highlight.

Also shared by respondents was their access to the info sessions; live sessions for the program overview and an opportunity to ask questions, and the recorded video for folks who were unable to attend.

What we heard

5% of respondents shared that the application opened up the opportunity for personal and organizational self-reflection.

Some took the opportunity for deeper reflection and to discuss with their team about their strategic plan, while also considering how aligned they are with BCAC's priorities.

Others spoke about what 'risk taking' looks like for them and what that might look like moving forward.

” Appointments with the program advisor were easy to make and they were helpful and informative.

” It helped me refine our “why”.

” The opportunity to think hard about what we do, how we do it, [...] and whether we're taking risks and growing as an organization. I think that's a healthy and important process.

Application: Challenges

Considering all components of this year's application (eg. program guidelines, deadline, questions, format, word counts, grant platform, labour and prep time), **what challenges did you experience?**

” The invitation to use point form, and then asking complex questions about rationale, seemed contradictory.



73%

Questions, word counts, and the connection to assessment criteria

n=167

What we heard

Respondents felt the questions were too repetitive or similar. This caused confusion and frustration for respondents who were unsure about how best to answer each question clearly, without being repetitive in their response.

Respondents also mentioned that the questions were narrowly focused and they were missing the opportunity to adequately share details about their artistic, programming, and "work" parts of their organization.

Word count (ranging from 200-500, depending on the question) was another aspect of the application that was highlighted.

Many respondents shared that they were challenged to write an effective response, especially for complex questions, ones that had multiple subquestions, and those that asked them to speak to multiple years of programming.

Other challenges included:

- Feeling like they were just "checking boxes to show how EDI we are."

- Confusion with the use of both "Designated Priority Groups" and "Equity-Deserving Communities," as the latter has a more expansive list of included groups.
- Multiple respondents (exclusively *Community Arts* applicants) found the budget a challenge, whether the categories don't easily align with their internal bookkeeping, or challenges with the portal to manually enter the data.
- Some respondents articulated that the equity priorities did not address the intersection with individuals who experience homelessness, living with mental health challenges, and other groups.

Application: Challenges

Considering all components of this year's application (eg. program guidelines, deadline, questions, format, word counts, grant platform, labour and prep time), **what challenges did you experience?**



44% Internal Capacity and Experience

n=167



31% Application Deadline

n=167

What we heard

The most common internal challenge was the increased labour or lack of capacity required to complete the application.

Other internal challenges included the lack of expertise required to respond to equity-focused questions; a general discomfort in responding to the questions; and, for some, the continued difficulty planning for an uncertain future because of the pandemic.

While these were expressed by both organizations that are volunteer-run and those that have paid staff, those identifying as volunteer-run or single-staff organizations were more likely to express labour and capacity challenges which was also exacerbated by the adjusted deadline.

What we heard

Shifting the application deadline to September 15 was the most expressed challenge related to aspects of the program guidelines. This includes the shift by approximately two weeks from the end of September for some program streams, and for other streams that previously applied in the spring, moving the deadline by approximately 6 months.

While also recognizing the value of the change from September 30 to ensure it didn't land on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, respondents shared that summer programming, annual holidays, and the start of the school year, coupled with a more complex application, added to their challenges.



The application required additional labour for our small organization. However, I found the breadth of questions and shift of attention to be compelling. I enjoyed working on this application.

Application: Challenges

Considering all components of this year's application (eg. program guidelines, deadline, questions, format, word counts, grant platform, labour and prep time), **what challenges did you experience?**



14% Technical and System

n=167

What we heard

For those who identified technical and system challenges, the most common thread was the additional labour to input table-based data, specifically the Budget and Stats (for applicable program streams), and Activity Summaries tables.

Related to the Activity Summaries tables, there were comments that the focus of the request was for public-facing activities, and other activities that might be core to or meaningful for the organization were not recognized.

Whether for stats, activities, or budgets, there were many requests for the ability to upload an excel sheet, rather than manually entering in the data, in order to ease the application labour.

”

This is an incredible amount of work and resources for such a small grant.

”

Not being able to upload an excel document cost us 6 hours of labour to copy and paste individual cells, on top of doing the usual CADAC updates.

”

Can relatively permanent stuff (eg. facilities) just be on file and editable on our organizational profile?