



**Final Report**  
**Youth Arts Open Fund**  
**2023-2024**

---



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL



**“This fund has been so valuable to our organisation. It has allowed us to expand our creative arts programming in a way that meant we could try different delivery styles and disciplines and figure out what was best for our organisation. We have made several new partnerships with artists and organisations as a result, learned many valuable skills within our staff team, and been able to offer the young people fantastic experiences.” (funded organisation)**



## Outcome

The Youth Arts Open Fund was administered by YouthLink Scotland (the national agency for youth work in Scotland) and is part of Creative Scotland's wider support for children and young people, funded by the Scottish Government. The purpose of the Youth Arts Open Fund was to support freelance artists or organisations seeking small amounts of funding to deliver arts activity for children and young people, prioritising those who have traditionally found it hardest to access such opportunities.

Funded projects were expected to engage children and young people in high-quality and accessible arts activity that empowered them through self-expression, enhanced their health, wellbeing and personal development, and built their confidence and skills.

Freelance artists could apply for funding up to £8k and organisations, for funding of up to £15k, to deliver up to 12 months of arts activity, and a total of £960k was available.

## Fund Timeline

3rd May 2023 - Fund opened for applications

5th June 2023 – Deadline to submit applications

6th June – 3rd July 2023 – Assessment period

10th July 2023 – National panel meeting

17th July 2023 – Outcome of panel decision communicated to applicants

1st August 2023 – 31st July 2024 – Delivery of funded projects

1st September 2024 – Project reports submitted

## The reach of the fund:

There were **214** applications to the fund and of these, **133** were short-listed (deemed to be fundable) by assessors from Creative Scotland and passed to the National Panel for consideration.

The overall request of the fund related to fundable applications was **£1,322,622**

The national panel made 78 awards totalling **£952,316**

**73** of the successful applications were led by organisations and 5 by freelance artists\*

Awards were made in **27** local authority areas

\* All arts activity was delivered by qualified and experienced artists.

## Type of arts experience:

Art form	Number of projects
Crafts	2
Dance	6
Digital	3
Film	3
Literature	1
Multi-art form	44
Music	2
Theatre	6
Traditional arts	4
Visual arts	5
Other	2

## Beneficiaries:

The fund reached **6,044** children and young people with lived experience that means they are less likely to access and benefit from arts opportunities. The following table describes this lived experience. Please note that the figures given below far exceed the total number of young people reached and illustrates that many of the young people face more than one of these issues in their lives (intersectionality).

Priority Groups	Number of Young People Supported
Children and young people at risk of child poverty	2,986
Children and young people experiencing or at risk of experiencing harm and neglect	897
Care experienced children and young people	501
Children and young people in the early years (0-5) of their life	958
Children and young people affected by discrimination and/or racism	1,520
Disabled children and young people	1,055
Children and young people with additional support needs	1,728
Children and young people with experience of the criminal justice system	119
Young carers and/or young parents	765
Children and young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, or who have been homeless	211

Age Group	Number of Children and Young People
1 -5 years	958
6 -10 years	1817
11-15 years	2210
16-20 years	782
21-25 years	277

## Impact:

In addition to prioritising children and young people (CYP) who have traditionally found it hardest to access such opportunities, funded projects were expected to support at least four of the following outcomes

a) developmental outcomes for young people:

Outcome	Number of CYP (reported by projects)
CYP facing additional barriers have equal opportunities to access artistic and creative activities.	4,254
CYP develop wider transferable skills through involvement in youth arts provision.	1,694
CYP are empowered through their involvement in youth-led activities and their voices are amplified.	2,595
The mental health & wellbeing of CYP is improved through their participation in artistic and creative activities.	4,467
CYP feel better able to express themselves through involvement in arts activities.	4,749
CYP feel better connected to their peers and communities.	3,829

b) capacity building outcomes:

Outcome	Number of partnerships (reported by projects)
Partnerships between youth work and youth arts partners are strengthened	11
Youth workers are more confident in embedding creative and artistic projects in their delivery	11

## Evaluation:

Projects self-evaluated with young people against the outcomes they selected using a variety of methods and specialist methods where required. A review of the evaluation methods across funded organisations suggests that the reported data is robust.

Examples of approaches to evaluation:

### Organisation – Whale Arts:

*“The first step in our evaluation process was to meet with the core group of young people we were planning to work with, to discuss the outcomes and indicators and what a potential picture of success looked like in relation to the indicators, and for them to give their feedback. We recognised that the statements within our application were general, so we broke each one of them down so that everyone understood what they meant. This was beneficial for the group as it highlighted the project in another light, and not just as something that was fun, but that has many other added benefits for them too. So, it was good to see the group recognise that. After doing that, we explored how we could show this success to people not involved in the project (our funders and fellow peers / community) and we agreed on various methods of collection.*”

*This meant that everyone involved understood that collecting evidence was part of the project too and ensured everyone felt comfortable contributing to it. From this, our evaluation plan was developed and included methods for collecting evidence. We measured each outcome using different methods, and the information from each has highlighted that we have achieved our outcomes. The main sources of evidence were observations and comments from young people and staff involved via our feedback sheets, informal group interviews and face-to-face surveys. We also gathered pictures and videos to capture evidence. The young people involved in the project also had the role of "peer interviewer", so most of the content and feedback was captured by participants themselves."*



## Organisation – The Wee Retreat:

*“We employed a multi-faceted evaluation approach to measure the outcomes of the drama club for young people. Our methods included direct participant feedback, facilitator observations, regular parent check-ins, and collaboration with partner organisations. We conducted informal verbal feedback sessions with participants during each session, allowing them to openly share their thoughts and feelings about the day's activities. This helped us tailor activities to keep the drama club engaging and enjoyable. By voicing their preferences, participants had an opportunity to evaluate their own progress. At the project's end, we used questionnaires to assess changes in confidence, social skills, and overall enjoyment. Ratings were on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicated little/ none and 5 indicated a lot. The young people rated their confidence before the drama club at an average of 2.5/5. By the end, their confidence averaged 5/5, showing a significant improvement.*

*They rated their learning about drama at 4.5/5 and their overall enjoyment at 5/5. When asked about their desire for the drama club to return, they added a box for 6, with the average rating at 5.5/5. This feedback highlights the club's value and the participants' eagerness for more opportunities. One participant mentioned, “I feel much more confident speaking in front of people now,” reflecting the positive impact on self-esteem. Another noted, “These have been the best Tuesdays ever.” Directing and prop-making were particularly popular activities. The facilitators, Scott and Emma, received ratings of 9.5/10, indicating strong leadership and session management.*

*We collaborated with Stravaig Theatre and the Dixon Community to gather additional feedback and insights. Their involvement ensured a comprehensive evaluation and allowed us to triangulate data from multiple sources. Facilitators from Stravaig Theatre documented their observations, noting improvements in engagement, teamwork, and performance skills. One facilitator observed, “Over the weeks, I've seen a significant increase in the willingness of the group to take creative risks and support each other.”*



*These insights were invaluable in assessing personal growth. Attendance was consistently high after the first month, indicating sustained engagement and interest. Evaluating the project revealed positive changes in participants' confidence, social skills, and overall wellbeing, alongside strengthened community partnerships.*



## Finance:

Grant payment	+£960,000
Award payments	- £952,316
Assessor fees	-£4,243.38
Returns	£4,194.90
Balance (to be carried forward to round)	+£7,635.52

## Monitoring:

Each funded project submitted an end of project report and short case study. Project visits were also carried out during the delivery period to build relationships with funded organisations; to see first-hand what was being delivered; whether any adaptations had been required and to assess any ongoing support needs.



## Project visits:

Organisation	Area	Date
Cutting Edge Theatre	Edinburgh	14/11/2024
Dunoon Burgh Hall	Argyll and Bute	16/11/2023
Whale Arts	Edinburgh	21/11/2023
SIMY Community Development	Glasgow	20/02/2024
Overdrive Dance	Glasgow	23/02/2024
Intergenerational Mentoring Network	Glasgow	06/03/2024
Waterbaby Arts	Argyll and Bute	22/03/2024
Barnardos North/South Ayrshire	North Ayrshire	12/03/2024
Cromarty Arts Trust	Highland	06/03/2024
Connecting Carers	Highland	07/03/2024
Lyth Arts	Highland	07/03/2024
Moray Arts Development Engagement	Moray	08/03/2024
Touch of Love	Aberdeen	08/03/2024

## The role of YouthLink Scotland:

YouthLink Scotland was responsible for all aspects of grant administration; recruitment and support of assessors and support to applicants and funded organisations throughout. We asked funded organisations to give feedback on the support received. 29 organisations responded giving very positive feedback (full feedback attached as appendix)

*"The YouthLink team has been great from the start, really supporting the work and I think the application process and feedback expected feels much more proportionate and reasonable than many others for similar award amounts, which is great for small charities like ours with limited staff capacity. Thanks so much for all your hard work."*



*"We are very thankful for the fund and the opportunities this provided for young women who have limited access to the arts. We would like to thank Donna and Jane for their support and communication. It was so nice to have Donna attend one of our end of project events. We felt so supported by Donna and Jane throughout the whole process. Thank you both."*





Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL



# YouthLink Scotland

YouthLink Scotland  
Caledonian Exchange  
19A Canning St.  
Edinburgh  
EH3 8EG

T: 0131 202 8050

E: [info@youthlink.scot](mailto:info@youthlink.scot)

W: [www.youthlink.scot](http://www.youthlink.scot)

YouthLink Scotland is a Company Limited by Guarantee.  
Registered in Scotland No: 164547. Charity Ref: SC003923



Achieved  
Valid Until  
January 2024

