



Canada Council for the Arts

DIGITAL ORIGINALS INITIATIVE

Qualitative Analysis of
Grant Application Data, 2020-21

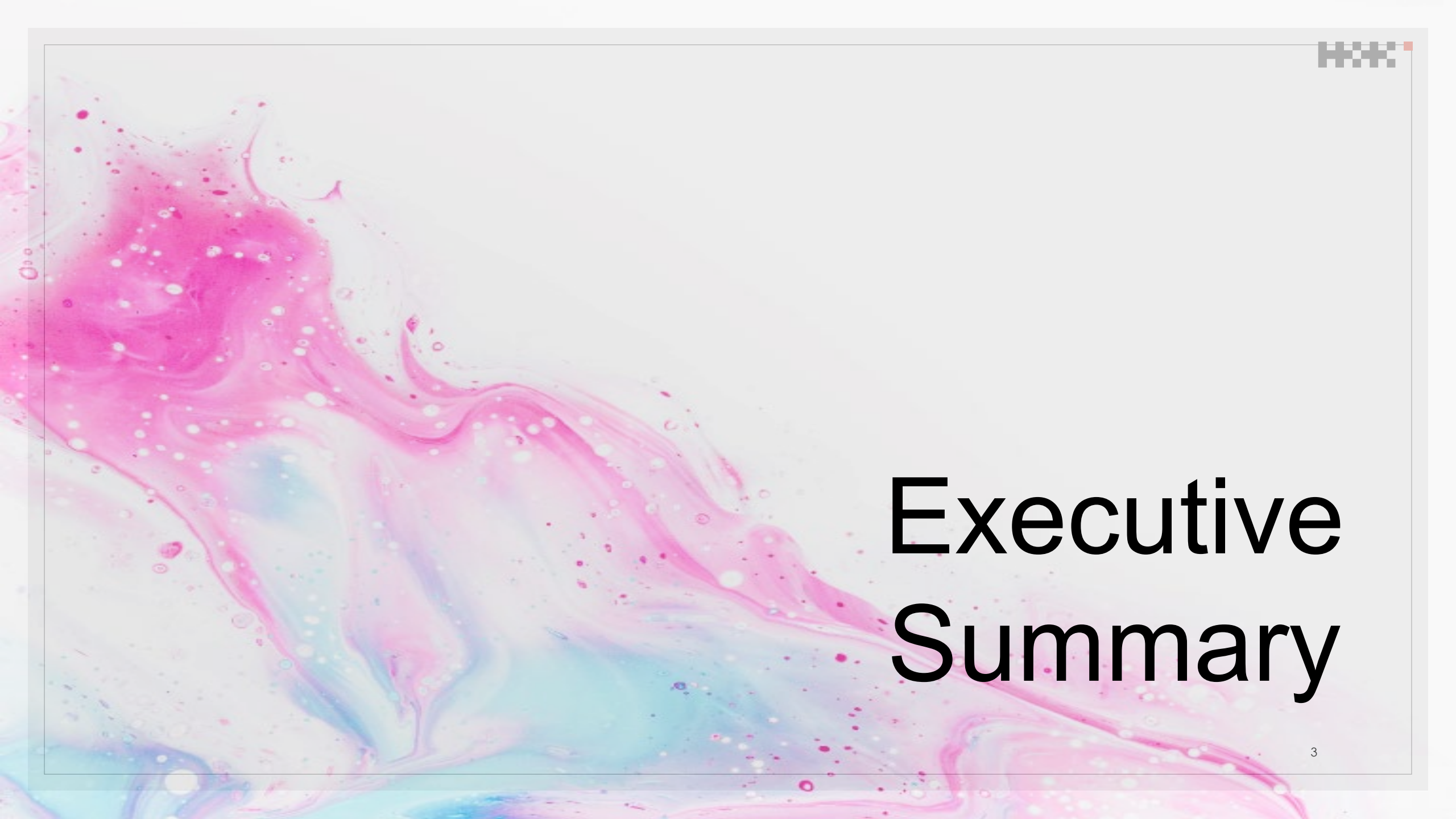
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The background of the slide is a vibrant, abstract marbled pattern. It features swirling, organic shapes in shades of pink, magenta, and light blue, set against a pale, off-white background. The colors blend and swirl together, creating a dynamic and artistic visual effect.

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

The analysis presented in this report is aimed at helping the Council determine the extent to which the Digital Originals Initiative helped the arts sector to 1) maintain jobs, and 2) innovate through the acquisition of skills, knowledge and technology.

The findings are drawn from a detailed analysis of information collected from the grant application forms of 1,026 successful recipients. The grant application information is very rich, covering a range of issues, including:

- the number of people expected to be involved in a project;
- whether artists or non-artists would be involved as collaborators or contractors/employees;
- how people would be financially compensated;
- whether and how public health guideline would be followed;
- intended project audience(s);
- project timelines, and;
- how a project would allow recipients and others involved in a project to develop, extend or innovate their artistic practice or digital knowledge.



Executive Summary (Con't)

Overall, the findings suggest that the grants had a positive impact in several areas, as summarized below.

Many collaborations and partnerships were facilitated or created, including new/first time collaborations.

- The vast majority expected to work in collaboration and/or hire other people, mainly other artists, but also non-artists. Only 15% of recipients indicated that they would be working alone.
- Most recipients provided information on adherence to COVID-19 public health measures. The most common approach for avoiding the virus was remote working (i.e., project participants would all work from different locations).

The number of people who benefited financially, and otherwise, extended well beyond individual grant recipients, indicating a strong multiplier effect.

- On average, 4 people were involved in each project (including the grant recipient). The projects developed by arts organizations included an average of 7 people, followed by groups at 4.5 and individuals at 3.5 people.
- Most of the recipients who addressed financial compensation in their application said that collaborators and/or contractors would be paid according to industry standards or based on their usual fee or rate.



Executive Summary (Con't)

Grant recipients expected to reach a wide spectrum of the general public. Some also targeted members of the arts and culture industry. Most recipients also expected their project to be accessible permanently (e.g., through social media).

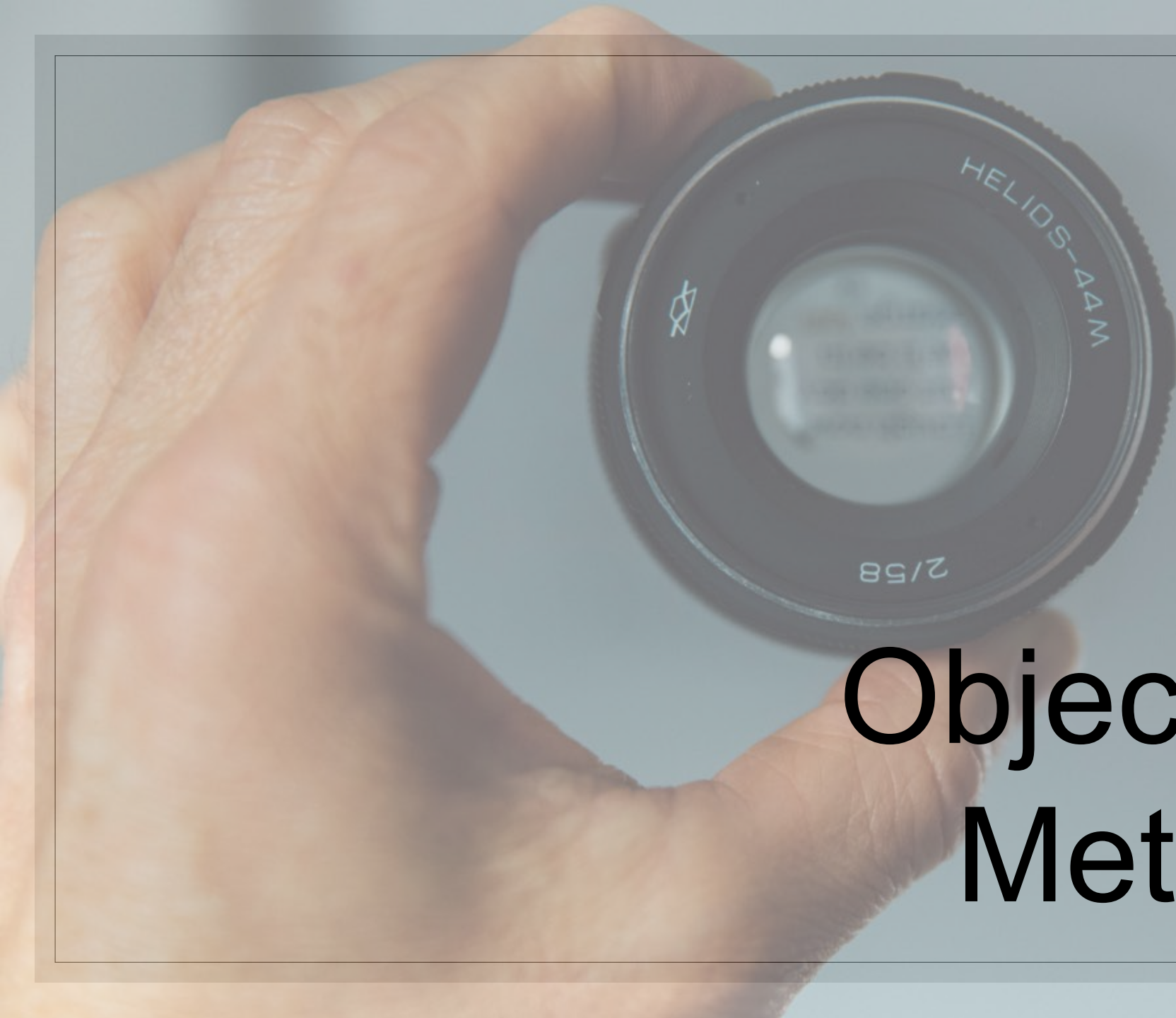
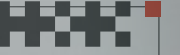
- Most recipients (about 8 in 10) expected to reach the public with their project, including youth, children and culturally diverse audiences. In addition, about 1 in 3 recipients hoped to reach “client” audiences, such as art professionals/other artists and people/organizations who display, exhibit or promote art.
- The analysis of grant applications also suggests that most projects were to be made available to the public on a permanent basis. It is also worth noting that the evidence suggests that a lot of time was devoted to the projects (i.e., a minimum of five weeks in approximately three-quarters of the cases).



Executive Summary (Con't)

A broad range of artistic and technical/technological skills and knowledge were acquired by project participants. Moreover, and with few exceptions, recipients highlighted at least two different benefits they expected the project to generate for those involved, including:

- The enhancement of artistic practice through knowledge and skills acquisitions not directly related to technology (e.g., a writer who would take on acting/performance).
- The opportunity to work in a new medium and/or blend artistic artforms (e.g., spoken word blended with photography).
- Digitization of work and the acquisition of digital skills.
- The enhancement of other technology-related skills, such as audio recording/engineering or editing.
- Other benefits included the opportunity to reach new audiences, as well as an expansion of their professional network.



Objectives and Methodology



Background and Objectives

The Council received over 4,200 applications for the Digital Originals Initiative highlighting a strong interest and flexibility in the arts sector to create and share work digitally.

The Council awarded over a thousand Digital Originals microgrants of \$5,000 each for a total investment of \$5.2M to projects in every province and territory and in all fields of practice.

The analysis presented in this report is aimed at helping the Council determine the extent to which the Initiative helped the sector maintain jobs, as well as pay artists and self-employed staff.

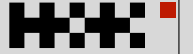


Methodology

Our analyses are based on information collected from the Digital Originals grant application forms of 1,026 successful recipients at the time of application. As a result, the responses provided by the recipients reflect the intended plans and may have changed during the course of the project.

The responses to the following three grant application questions were analyzed:

- Q1. If applicable, include information on the key artists. If you are hiring artists, explain how you will determine the fees to be paid. Indicate how you plan to respect public health measures if you are collaborating with others.
- Q2. Outline your plan and timeline for sharing your project online. Who do you intend to reach with this project?
- Q3. Briefly describe your project and how it will allow you to develop, extend or innovate your artistic practice or digital knowledge.



Methodology

The analysis consisted of the following 4-step process:

1. *An initial random sample of responses from the question data set was reviewed to create coding categories.*
2. *The draft coding scheme was refined in consultation with Council staff.*
3. *Based on the coding scheme, each response was assigned one or more categories/codes. Except for part of Q2 (expected timeline for researching and completing their project), multiple codes could be used.*
4. *As responses were coded, categories were refined, added or grouped as needed based on the responses.*

Responses from 1,026 recipients are analysed in this report. Profile information on the recipients and applications (i.e., type of contact and field of practice) were linked to the responses to allow cross-tabulations.

Note: Some grant recipients did not provide relevant responses to some of the questions or parts of questions. The results presented in this report are based on an analysis of relevant responses only.



Detailed Findings



Question 1

If applicable, include information on the key artists. If you are hiring artists, explain how you will determine the fees to be paid. Indicate how you plan to respect public health measures if you are collaborating with others.

For analyses, this question was divided into three parts:

1. Information on the staff/collaborators (including number of artists/non-artists working on a project).
2. If you are hiring artists, explain how you will determine the fees to be paid.
3. Indicate how you plan to respect public health measures if you are collaborating with others.



Detailed Findings

The analysis suggests **that the impact or “reach” of the grants went significantly beyond the grant recipients**, particularly where organizations are concerned.

Of 1,026 applications, it was possible in 860 instances to tell with reasonable confidence if a project would involve people other than the recipients and whether others would be a collaborator or have more of an employer-employee relationship. Of the 860, **only 15% of recipients indicated that they would be working alone**. The vast majority expected to work in collaboration and/or hire other people, mainly other artists, but also non-artists.

In terms of the number of people involved in projects, of the 1,026 recipient applications analysed, 757 indicated that they would either be working alone or with a specific number of other people. In the remaining 269 instances it was not possible to tell how many people would be involved. Added together, a total of 3,058 people were expected to work across 757 projects, for **an average of 4 people per project** (including the recipient).

- In the case of arts organizations, they reported on average of close to 7 people involved in their projects, followed by groups at an average of 4.5 people and individuals at an average of 3.5 people.



Detailed Findings

A total of 740 recipients provided analysable information on the issue of compensation. Of these, the most likely approach was to compensate their collaborators and/or contractors according to **industry standards** or **based on their usual fee or rate**. Other methods of compensation included lump sum payments, sharing the grant, as well as others.

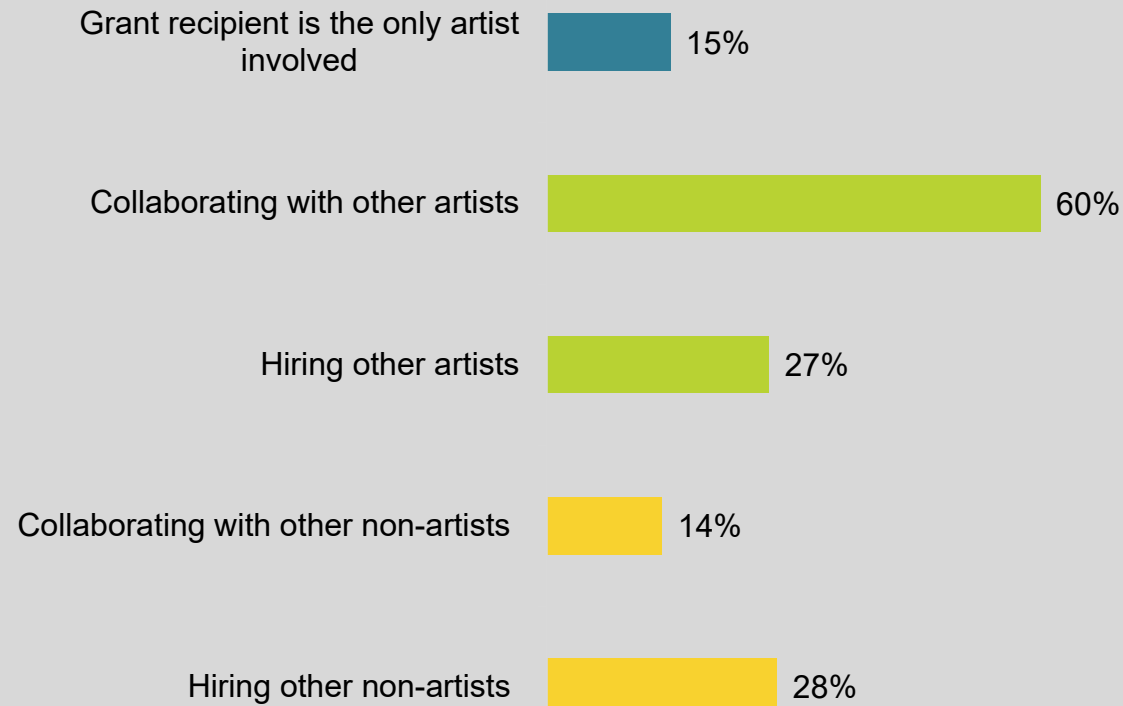
- As could be expected, artists working alone on their project accounted for a significant proportion of those who did not address this question in their application.

A total of 680 grant recipients explained how those involved in a project would respect COVID-19 public health measures, with **the most common approach being remote working** (i.e., project participants would all work from different locations).

- Once again, recipients who did not address this question were more likely to be artists working alone on their project.



Information on Staff and Collaborators



Of 1,026 grant recipients, 1 did not provide relevant information, 165 did not provide any information (empty cells, “not applicable”). This analysis is based on the responses of the remaining 860 grant recipients.

- 82% of recipients either collaborated and/or hired one or more other artists.
- 42% of recipients either collaborated and/or hired one or more non-artists.
- Organizations and groups were much more likely to collaborate/hire other artists (93% and 91% respectively), compared to individuals 78%.
- Focusing on collaboration, we find that groups were more likely to collaborate (73%). Organizations, in contrast, were more likely to hire (41%).
- Those in the “visual arts” field of practice were most likely to work alone on their project (32% compared to an overall average of 15%).
- Those working in “theatre” were most likely to collaborate with, or hire, other artists (93% compared to an overall average of 82%).

Number of People Working on a Project (Artists and Non-Artists)

Of 1,026 grant recipients, 102 did not provide relevant information, 167 did not provide any information (empty cells, “not applicable”). This analysis is based on the remaining 757 grant recipients.

Of the 757 recipients included in this analysis, some expected to work alone, while others planned on hiring and/or collaborating with one or more artists and/or non-artists. Added together, 3,058 people were expected to work on these 757 projects, for an overall average of 4 people per project.

Average Team Size

Individual



3.5

Group



4.5

Organization

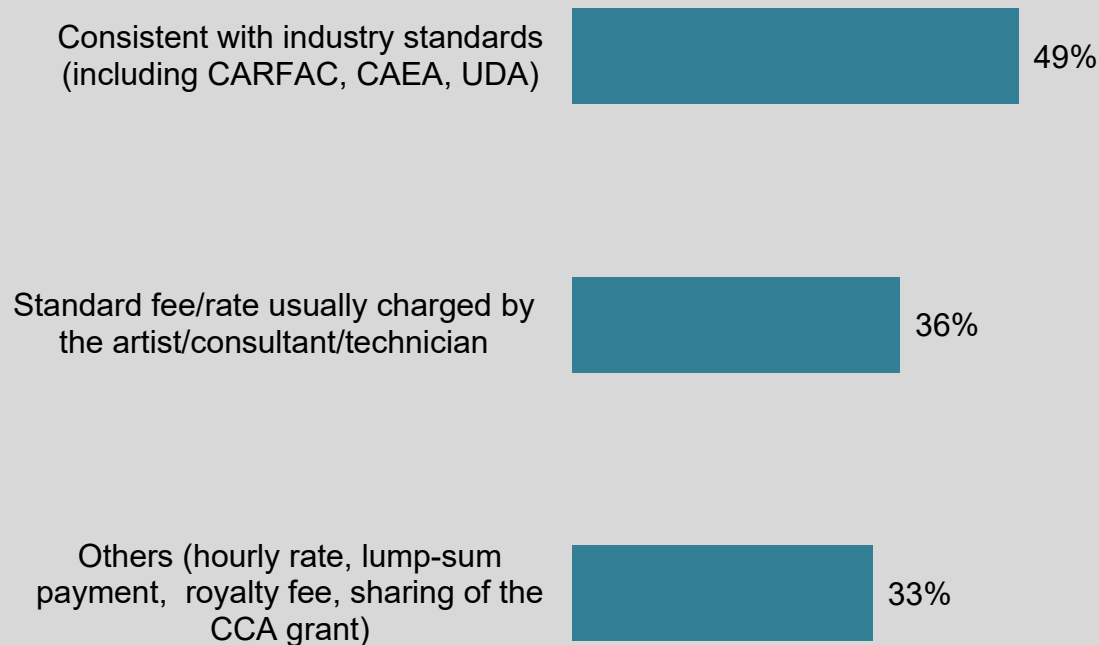


6.8

By field of practice, media arts (3.3), visual arts (3.1) and digital arts (2.2) all involved fewer people than average.

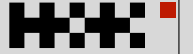


Compensation

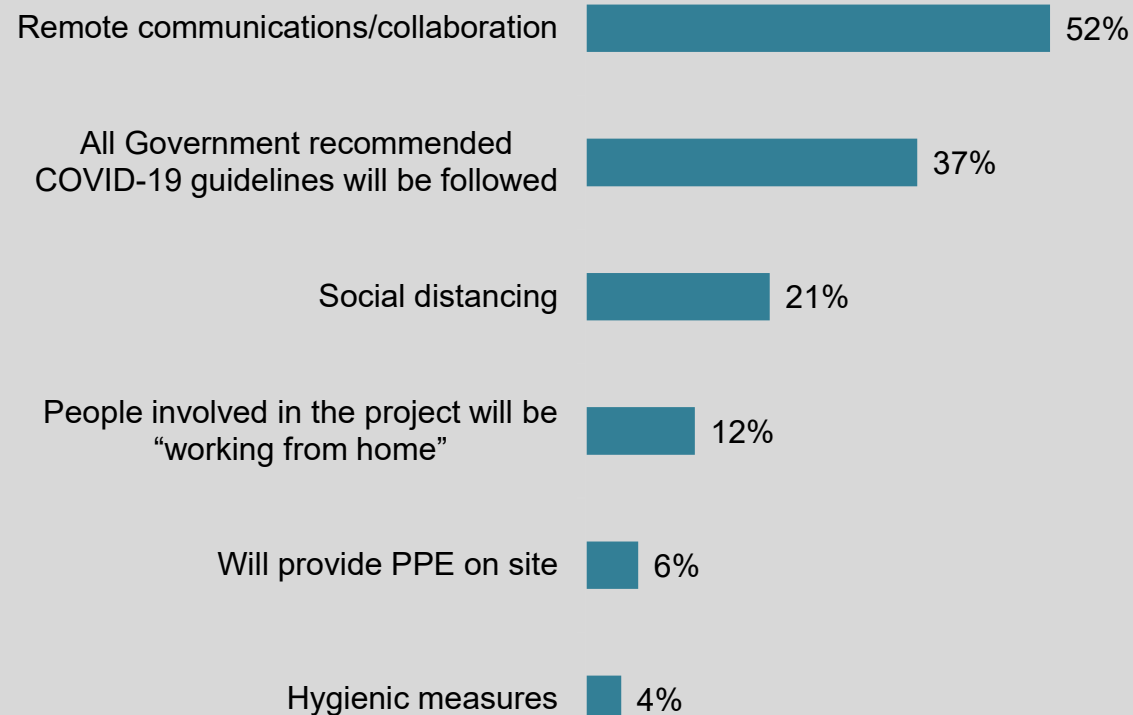


Of 1,026 grant recipients, 121 did not provide relevant information, 165 did not provide any information (empty cells, “not applicable”). This analysis is based on remaining 740 grant recipients.

- In most instances, compensation was based on industry standards or standards fees/rates. Responses that did not explicitly mention these two forms of compensation were coded in the “**other**” category. It’s important to note that inclusion in this category does not suggest that compensation was sub-standard or unfair.
- Organizations were more likely to pay other artists/non-artists consistent with the **industry standards** (69%).
- Among fields of practice, 8 in 10 grant recipients practicing “multidisciplinary activities” and 7 in 10 involved in “theatre” paid others artists/non-artists based on **industry standards**.



Respecting Public Health Measures



Of 1,026 grant recipients, 181 did not provide relevant information, 165 did not provide any information (empty cells, "not applicable"). This analysis is based on remaining 680 grant recipients.

- Over half the recipients relied on **remote communications**, and 4 in 10 recipients followed **all the government recommended COVID-19 guidelines**.
- The smaller number of grant recipients included in this analysis reflects the fact that some worked alone on their project, and thus had no need to follow public health measures.
- Sub-group analysis reveals consistency across recipient type and field of practice.



Question 2

Outline your plan and timeline for sharing your project online. Who do you intend to reach with this project?

For analysis, we divided this question into 4 parts:

1. Project research and completion time.
2. Project dissemination time (i.e., period of availability to audiences).
3. Target audiences.
4. Target clients.



Detailed Findings

The evidence suggests that a **lot of preparation time was spent on the projects**. The analyses also indicate that most projects were to be made **available to the public on a permanent basis**.

- A total of 839 recipients specified the amount of time they expected to devote to completing their project (e.g., including conceptualization, research, preparation, creation, revision). In most of these instances (72%), project completion was expected to take a minimum of 5 weeks, with 42% expecting that it would span 8 or more weeks.
- Most recipients expected to make their **project permanently available to audiences** (e.g., through a website, social media account). In 21% of cases, this permanent availability was in addition to a specific window in which their project would be initially available in a more focused way (e.g., at a festival, series of performances).
- Three-quarters of recipients (787 of 1,026) provided information about their plans for public dissemination of their project. In many cases, the **target audience was broadly identified as the general public**. Other recipients provided more detail, identifying one or more specific segments of the public, notably **culturally diverse audiences, youth, and children**.
- A total of 347 recipients expressed a desire to reach what can be categorized as “client” audiences (in many cases in addition to a general public target audience). The most common client audience segments were **art professionals/other artists** and **people/organizations who display, exhibit or promote art**.



Expected Time Required to Research and Create the Project

Project Research and Creation Time (Only one code per application selected)



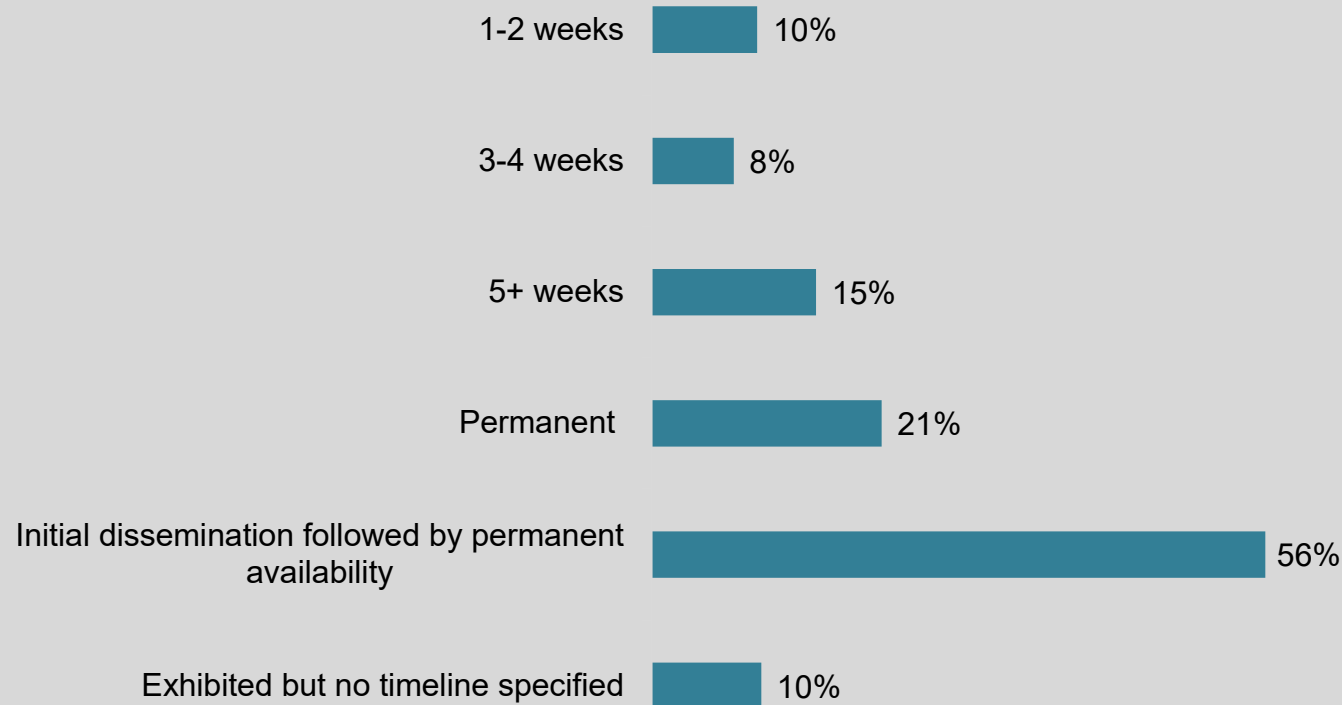
Of 1,026 grant recipients, 187 did not provide relevant information. This analysis is based on remaining 839 grant recipients.

- In most of these instances (72%), project completion was expected to take a minimum of 5 weeks
- Recipients practicing “dance” expected to devote relatively less time to researching and creating their project, with 47% indicating 1-4 weeks.
- Conversely, “visual arts” recipients expected to take longer than recipients in other fields of practice, with 54% indicating 8+ weeks.



Timeline for Sharing the Project Online

Dissemination Time

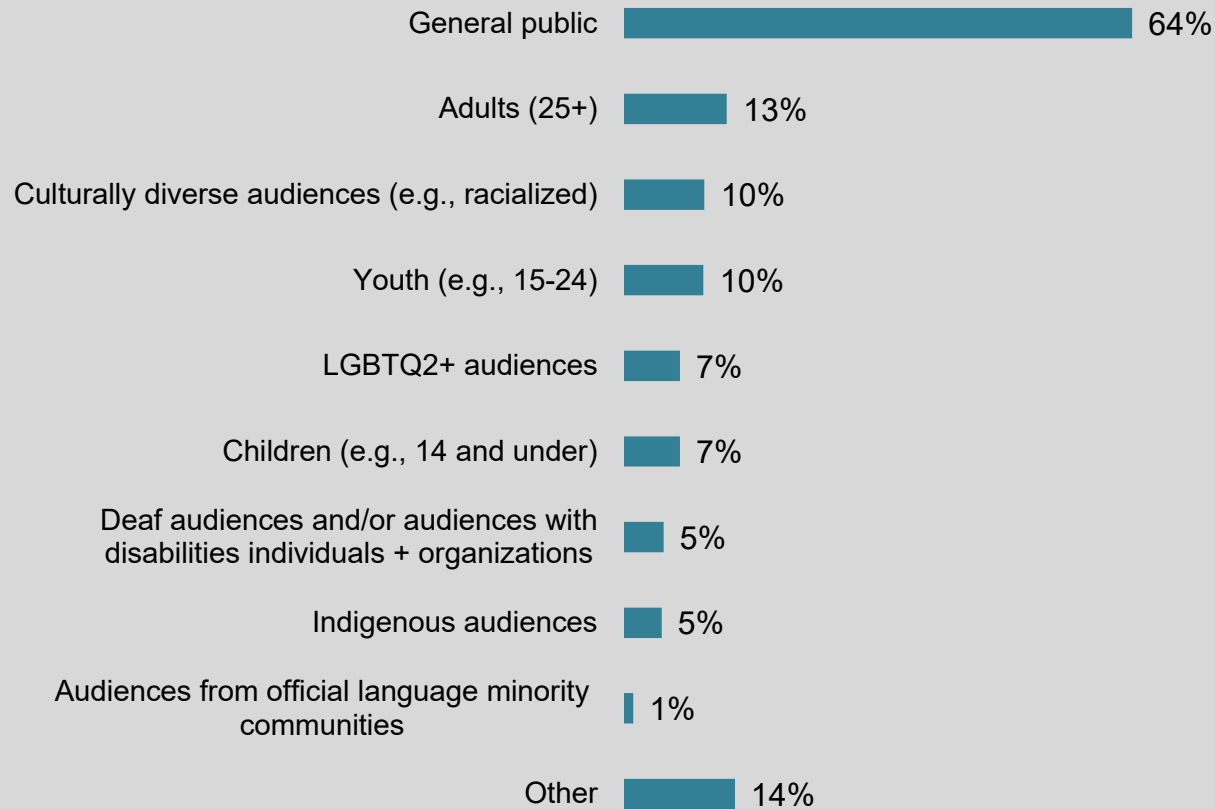


Of 1,026 grant recipients, 31 did not provide relevant information. This analysis is based on remaining 995 grant recipients.

- Most recipients expected to make their project permanently available to audiences (e.g., through a website, social media account).
- Relative to others, recipients practicing “dance” expected that their project would be made available (at least initially) for the shortest time, with 24% indicated 1-2 weeks.
- 33% of the “digital arts” recipients indicated that their project would be shared with audiences, but no timeline was specified.



Target Audiences



Of 1,026 grant recipients, 348 did not provide useful information. This analysis is based on remaining 787 grant recipients.

- Most recipients (about 8 in 10) expected to reach the public with their project, including youth, children and culturally diverse audiences.
- In other instances, recipients were more specific, identifying one or more of the **audience segments**, such as youth or children.
- Children were most likely to be identified as a specific audience by those working in “theatre” (17%) and “literature” (17%).



Target Clients



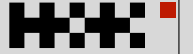
Of 1,026 grant recipients, 679 did not provide relevant information. This analysis is based on remaining 347 grant recipients.

- Most recipients' grant applications did not identify target clients (i.e., people that are part of the arts and culture industry, such as promoters or intermediaries/disseminators of art through schools and libraries).
- Among recipients that did identify target clients for their project, other artists and people who display, exhibit/host art were most often mentioned.
- 89% of "multidisciplinary arts" recipients identified art professionals/other artists as their target clients.
- 44% of the recipients working in "literature" indicated teachers/educators/librarians/universities/schools as their target clients.



Question 3

Briefly describe your project and how it will allow you to develop, extend or innovate your artistic practice or digital knowledge.



Detailed Findings

The analysis suggests that the grants have allowed recipients and their staff and/or collaborators to **further their artistic practice** and/or **enhance their digital skills and other technical skills** in several ways. It is also apparent that the artists were **excited about the possibilities** afforded to them by the grant.

In the vast majority of cases, recipients highlighted **at least two different benefits** they expected the grant to have on their knowledge, skills and abilities.

- In about 4 in 10 cases, recipients expected to **enhance their artistic practice**. That is, knowledge and skills acquisition not directly related to technology (e.g., a writer who would take on acting/performance, a dancer learning to choreograph, a poet adding to an existing collection).
- In a similar vein, about one-third of recipients explained how they intended to **work in a new medium and/or blend artistic artforms** (e.g., spoken word blended with photography).

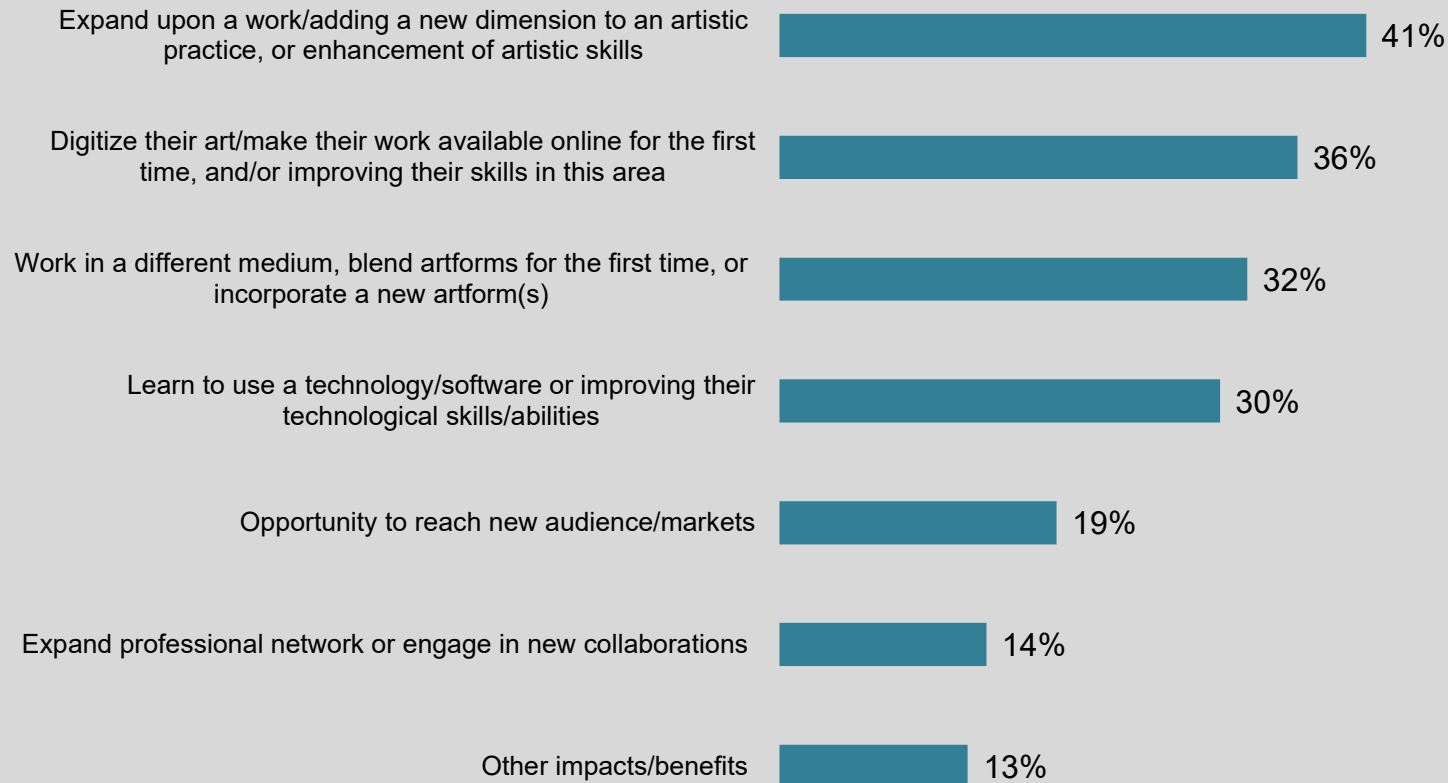


Detailed Findings

- **Digitization of their work** and the **acquisition of digital skills** was specifically mentioned by about one-third of recipients. A similar proportion looked forward to **enhancing other technology-related skills**, such as audio recording/engineering or editing.
- Other benefits mentioned by recipients included the opportunity to **reach new audiences**, as well as an **expansion of their professional network**.
- “Other” benefits include financial sustainability, learning about arts practices of different equity groups, and enhancement of business/marketing skills.
- Expected benefits were **consistent across fields of practice and recipient type**.



Project Description and Potential for Innovation



Of 1,026 grant recipients, 15 did not provide relevant information (empty cells, “not applicable”). This analysis is based on remaining 1011 grant recipients.

- Most recipients expected their project would allow them to innovate or otherwise improve their artistic skills/abilities in at least two ways.
- The analysis also reveals that collectively, expected impacts were wide-ranging, including the enhancement of artistic skills, the acquisition of technical knowledge, and skills and opportunities to reach new markets and expand networks (e.g., through mentoring).



Illustrative Quotes

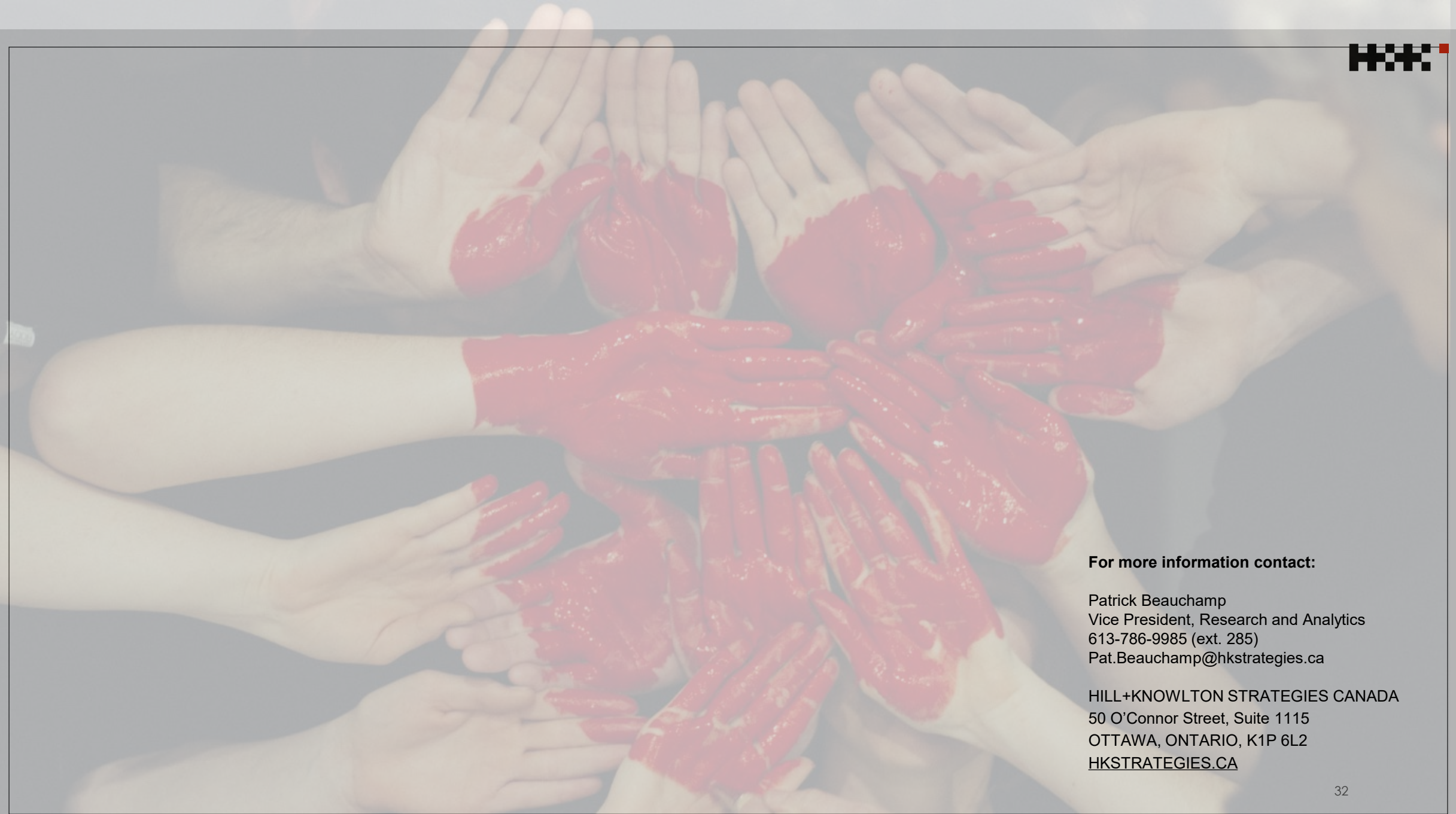
Below are a variety of *verbatim* quotes from recipients' response to Question 3:

- *“I will be innovating and extending my skills as a producer and editor to create professional level digital content. These skills are incredibly important for a career in the modern digital age and even more so during this pandemic. An accurate and professional video of these songs will greatly extend my artistic practice and raise my knowledge of creating online content.”*
- *“I wish to utilize this opportunity to use my creativity and innovation in furthering my skills with my art as a composer and arranger as well as develop my skills with how to use technology creatively as a modern-day music producer to share my music online. This project can and will be done without the assistance of anyone.”*
- *“The project is an opportunity to contribute significantly to my experience managing and broadcasting concerts online and will also improve my skills in video editing, as well as build my audience and fan base worldwide in a new and meaningful way.”*



Illustrative Quotes (cont.)

- *“The project is an opportunity to explore the potential of the latest 3D technologies. With this project, I am focusing on the optical effects enabled by textures, moving lighting, shading and movement in space, while including parametric shapes.”*
- *“I would like to create a Skill Share Series where I share tips and tricks to choosing the right equipment for streaming, recording, and performing. Throughout the pandemic, I have seen that there is a lack in technology literacy... I would like to take this opportunity to help artists save time and money by offering free workshops and PDF guides that are current and informed by the realities of COVID-19.”*
- *“Escapades will enable a range of disciplines I work with presently to be combined in a new type of creation. Writing narrations, performing and recording them, adding them, along with original soundscapes to the VR will result in previously unexplored digital territory, for me, as a solo digital series.”*
- *“I no longer have any doubts—I have the means to transcribe my story in a creative way using the Internet as a real artistic platform. That will be a first for me. I have consulted a Web programmer who is willing to help me (remotely) with the project.”*



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