Canada Council for the Arts

Explore and Create

Qualitative Analysis of
Grant Application Data, 2021-22
Final Report: April 29, 2022

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Introduction

Explore and Create is Canada Council for the Arts (Council) grant program that funds Canadian artists, artistic groups and organizations. Under this program, the Council held competitions in April and October 2021, from which 4,715 grants were awarded to support recipients in researching, creating and disseminating their artwork.

The purpose of this report is to analyze the grant application data and help the Council to understand how the funds were utilized, the nature and inspiration behind the projects, the projects' contribution to artistic development and practice, and project timing and method of dissemination.

Methodology

Given the large number of successful program grant applications, random sampling was used to reduce costs and save time: A sample of 2,481 cases from the 4,715 successful grant applications was carefully drawn. The sampling plan (described in the next section of this report) was developed in consultation with Council officials.

The application data was analyzed using a slightly revised version of the thematic coding framework used in the 2021 Explore and Create Grant Application analysis -- minor refinements were made based on an initial analysis of applications and in consultation with Council officials. Based on the final coding framework, each response was assigned one or more codes. After coding, tabulations were produced. These tabulations form the basis of this report.

Executive Summary

Grant Recipient Profile

As in the 2021 analysis, **grants were awarded fairly evenly** between the Research and Creation (57%) and the Concept to Realization (43%) components of the program. We also found that in 83% of cases, grants went to individuals as compared to organizations (8%) and groups (9%). Across artistic fields of practice, a slim plurality of grants (42%) were awarded to those working in the performing arts, followed by studio arts (35%) and Literature (17%). About one in 20 grants (6%) went to the multidisciplinary field of practice.

The **average grant size was $28,533** overall, only a few hundred dollars off the 2021 total. Among the two components average grants were $20,637 for the Research and Creation and about double that ($39,206) for Concept to Realization (also very consistent with 2021 amounts).

Nature of Artistic Work and Sources of Inspiration

The analysis suggests that the program has been a **catalyst for the production of new works** (i.e., according to 69% of grant applications).

In terms of the inspiration for their art, **personal experiences** were mentioned by most (53%). This was followed by a desire to illuminate/share with Canadians the **perspective of racialized or culturally diverse communities** (26%). Other artists also served as a major source of inspiration (21%), while a similar proportion were inspired by **gender** (20%).

Executive Summary

Expected Contributions to Artistic Development and Artistic Practice

Analysis suggests that the program has contributed to the artistic development of grant recipients in many different ways, such as by allowing them to complete an unfinished work (29%), developing a larger/more ambitious work (20%) or developing their ability to digitize their work (based on the combined results of three codes).

610 sampled recipients (or 25% of grant recipients) wrote about how their project could potentially advance their field of artistic practice, which is a much higher than the 10% of recipients who wrote about this in 2021. The following two main themes emerged from our analysis:

- The most common theme revolved around **allowing for artistic experimentation.** For example, through the **use of technology in a new and innovative way**.

- Another popular theme was the creation of a project that will lead to **expanded professional networks, or increased engagement in artistic collaborations, to benefit the artistic practice/wider community of artists** (e.g., along the lines of "the whole being greater than the sum of its parts.")

Executive Summary

Timing and Methods of Dissemination

An analysis of grant application that mention a dissemination period suggest that **83% of the projects would, in whole or in part, be disseminated in 2022**, with 29% in 2021 and 15% in 2023.

Of the sampled recipients who addressed dissemination method(s), **86% expected to do so in-person**, while 8% expected to disseminate their work online, and 6% envisioned utilizing both approaches.

Among the dissemination methods, **live performances** (e.g., concert, dance, theatre) (30%) and **screening to audiences and festivals** (29%) are the most common.

Objectives and Methodology

Background Objectives

Explore and Create funds Canadian artists, artistic groups and organizations committed to the creation and dissemination of innovative, vibrant and diverse art.

This Canada Council for the Arts (Council) program has two components: 1) "Research and Creation", and 2) "Concept to Realization". The later offers support for all stages of an artistic project, whereas the former focuses on the initial stage.

The Council awarded 4,715 grants to artists, arts groups and organizations with a total investment of over $133 million to projects in every province and territory and in all fields of practice.

The analysis presented in this report is aimed at helping the Research, Measurement and Data Analytics (RMDA) Section of the Council understand how the funds were used, including, the nature of and inspiration for projects, the projects' contribution to artistic development and practice and project timing and method of dissemination.

Methodology

A sample of 2,481 cases from the 4,715 successful grant applications was carefully drawn. The sampling plan (described below) was developed in consultation with Council officials.

Sampling Plan:

The full database of 4,715 cases was first assessed by the following nine variables: CONTACT_TYPE, PROVINCE_ACRO, FIELD_OF_PRACTICE, FIRST_TIME_RECIPIENT_IND, INDIGENOUS_IND, CULTURALLY_DIVERSE_IND, DEAF_AND_DISABILITY_IND, ANGLOPHONE_OLM_IND, FRANCOPHONE_OLM_IND. The sample sizes for each of the different categories of these variables was considered.

Categories with less than 30 cases were marked to remain in the final sampled database to prevent diluting their sample size any further. This occurred for Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Prince Edward Island

Half of the remaining cases were randomly sampled. The Council then examined the sampled dataset, identifying an additional 101 cases from the full data base that should be included in the sampled version to ensure higher sample sizes for rarer cases.

Methodology

The results are based on an analyses of information contained in 2,481 "Explore and Create" grant application forms. Specifically, the responses to the following three grant application questions were analyzed:

1. Describe your project. Explain the inspiration for your project or why you wish to undertake it at this time. (approximately 750 words, 5,000 characters)

2. How will this project contribute to your, or your group's, artistic development? advance artistic practice? (approximately 500 words, 3,500 characters)

3. What art form(s), style(s), genre(s) and/or expression(s) are most relevant to this application? (approximately 25 words, 150 characters). This question was not included in last year's analysis.

4. Provide a one-sentence summary of your project. If possible, use the format ACTIVITY, EVENT (if relevant) and DATES. (approximately 25 words, 150 characters) *(Concept to Realization Component Only)*

Methodology

The analysis consisted of the following 3-step process:

1. The coding scheme from the 2021 Explore and Create Grant Application was reviewed and refined based on the results of initial coding.

2. Minor adjustments were made to the coding scheme in consultation with the Council.

3. Once the codes were finalized and coding resumed, each response was assigned one or more categories/codes. Multiple codes could be used to analyse responses to grant application questions, except for part of Q5 (online vs. in person dissemination).

The recipient profiling information contained in the applications (i.e., program component, type of contact and field of practice) were linked to the analyzed responses to allow crosstabulations.

Note: In a few instances 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

Respondent Profile

(based on the sample of 2,481 grants)

Canada Council for the Arts / Conseil des arts du Canada

Component

Concept to Realization: 43%
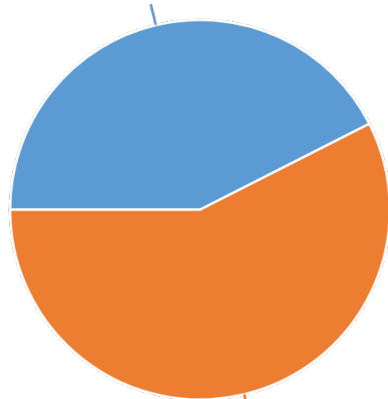
Research and Creation: 57%

Contact Type

Group: 9%

Individual: 83%

Organization: 8%
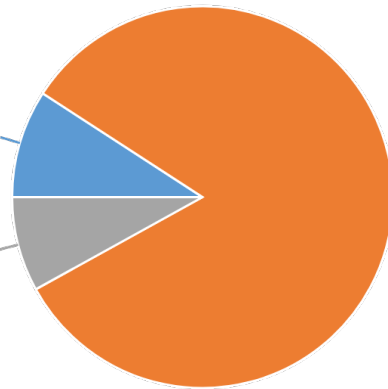
Field of Practice

Performing Arts — 42%

Studio Arts — 35%

Literature — 17%

Multidisciplinary — 6%

Average Grant

(based on the sample of 2,481 grants – in CAD $)

Canada Council for the Arts | Conseil des arts du Canada

By Component

Both Components	Research and Creation	Concept to Realization
$28,533	**$20,637**	**$39,206**

By Contact Type

Individuals	Groups	Organizations
$27,242	**$32,274**	**$37,605**

Project Description and Inspiration

Application Question #1

> Describe your project. Explain the inspiration for your project or why you wish to undertake it at this time.

For analyses, this question was divided into two parts:

1. Project description

2. Project inspiration

Project Description and Inspiration

Key Findings

The analysis reveals that over two thirds (69%) of the 2,481 grants were to be used to **create a new work, or new work within an existing series** (e.g., second volume or part).

- An additional 17% used the funding to **develop a work they had started before applying for the grant.**

Artists were inspired by a wide range of sources. The most common, mentioned by more than half of the recipients (53%) were inspired by their **personal experiences** (e.g., autobiographical character, drawing lived experiences or people they know or knew).

- A quarter of artists (26%) were inspired by or wanted to speak from the perspective of a **racialized person or culturally diverse community**.

- About one-fifth of recipients (21%) pointed to **other artists**, either living or dead, as sources of inspiration.

- Another one in five identified **gender** as a source of inspiration for their art (e.g., female empowerment, sexuality).

Project Description and Inspiration

Analysis of Project Description

Sub-group analysis

Creation of new work and creation of work in a series — 69%

Development of a work in progress — 17%

Presentation, production, exhibition or publication of one or more finished/nearly finished works — 8%

Background/Creative research — 5%
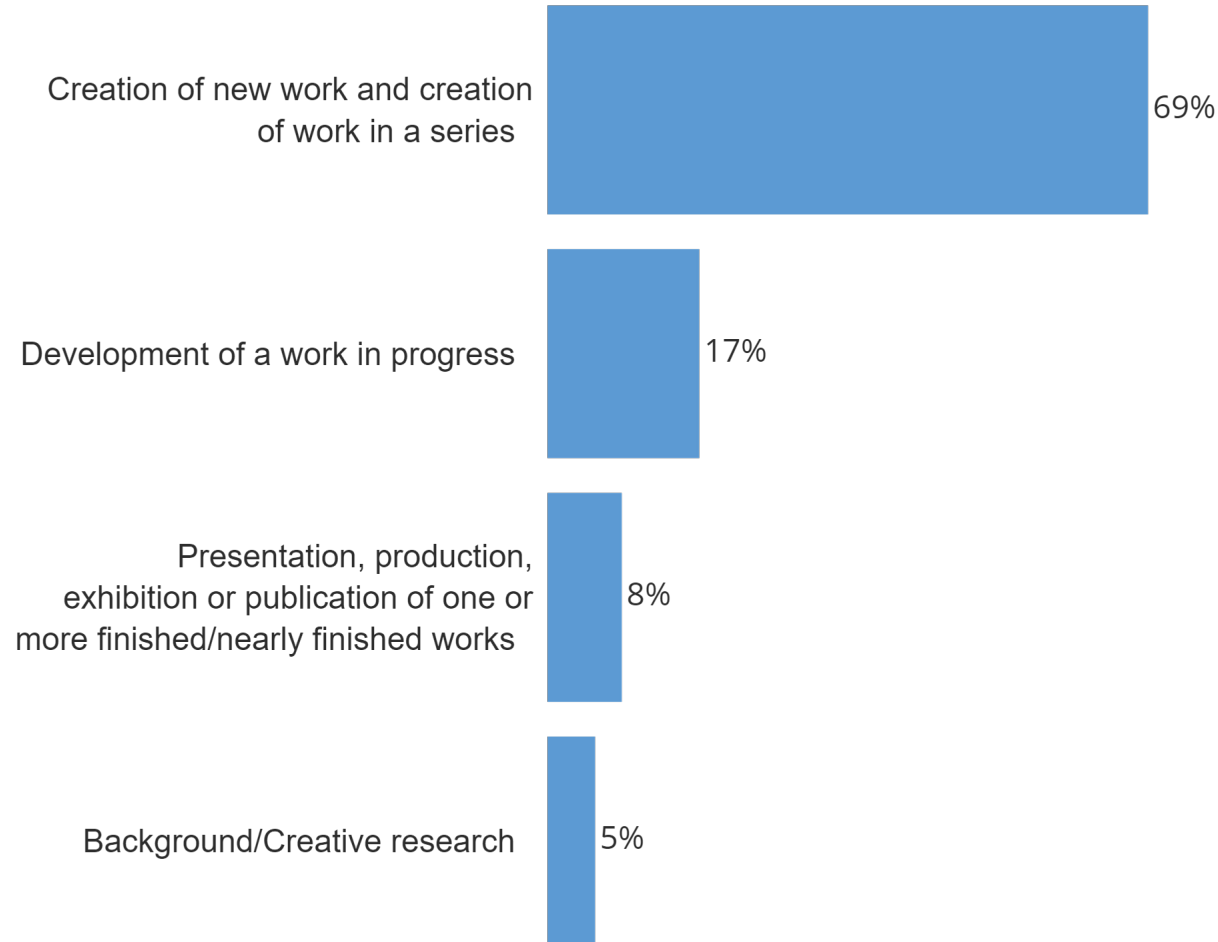
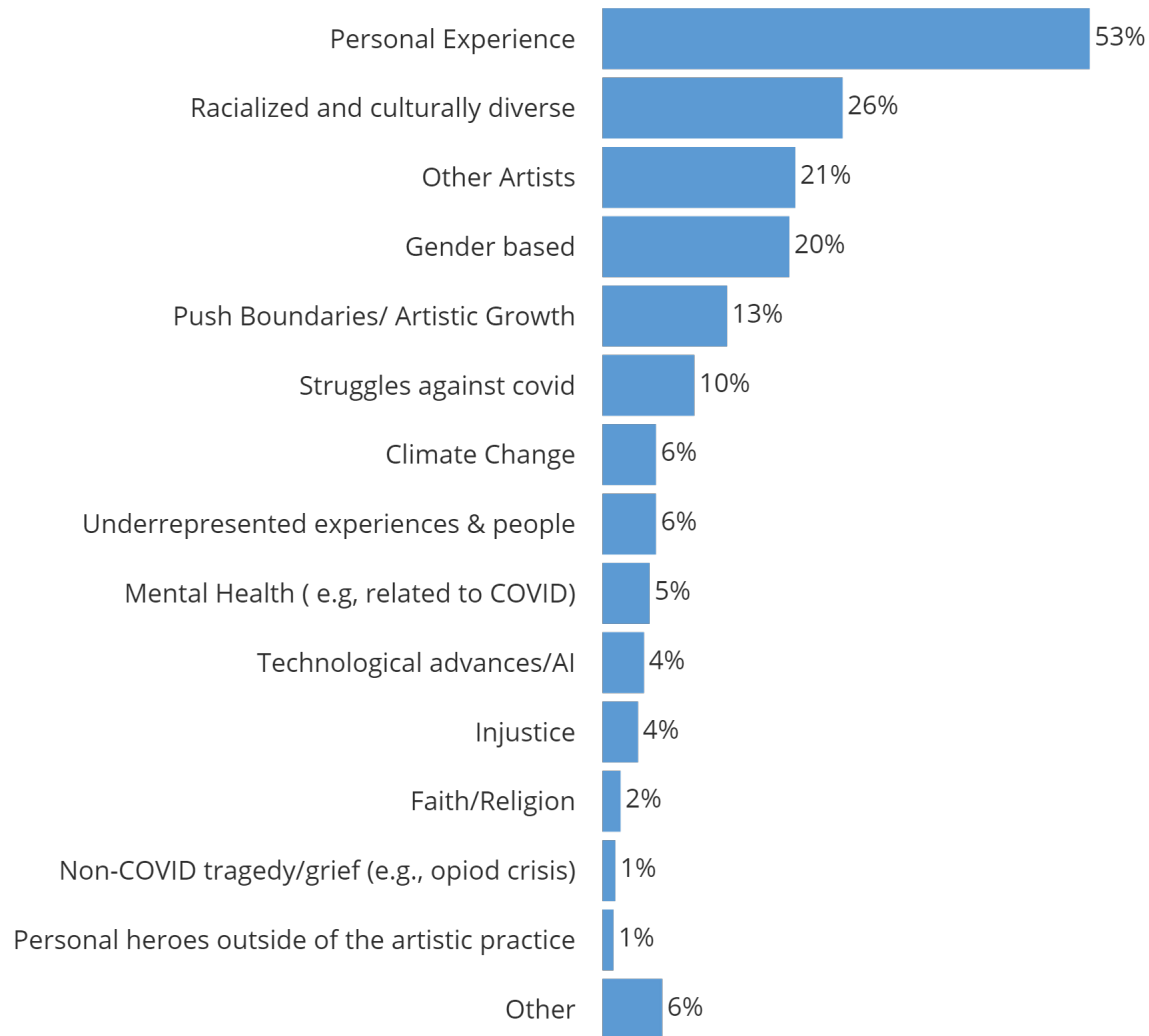- Those in the **"Literature"** field of practice are more likely to **develop a work in progress** (28% vs 17% overall).

- Recipients in the **"Performing Arts"** field of practice are more likely to be **presenting, exhibiting or publishing a nearly finished work** (12% vs 8% overall).

Q. Describe your project. Explain the inspiration for your project or why you wish to undertake it at this time. n=2,481

Project Description and Inspiration

Analysis of Project Inspiration

Personal Experience — 53%
Racialized and culturally diverse — 26%
Other Artists — 21%
Gender based — 20%
Push Boundaries/ Artistic Growth — 13%
Struggles against covid — 10%
Climate Change — 6%
Underrepresented experiences & people — 6%
Mental Health (e.g, related to COVID) — 5%
Technological advances/AI — 4%
Injustice — 4%
Faith/Religion — 2%
Non-COVID tragedy/grief (e.g., opiod crisis) — 1%
Personal heroes outside of the artistic practice — 1%
Other — 6%

Sub-group analysis

- **Individuals** are more likely to get inspiration from **personal experience** compared to groups and organizations. (57% vs. 31% and 31%) respectively.

- Recipients in the **"Literature"** field of practice are more likely to get inspiration from **personal experience** (64% vs 53% overall), as well as **racialized and culturally diverse experience**s (33% vs 26% overall), and **gender-based issues** (41% vs 20% overall).

- Those in the **"Multidisciplinary"** field of practice are more likely to be inspired by **technological advances or AI** (11% vs 4% overall).

Q. Describe your project. Explain the inspiration for your project or why you wish to undertake it at this time. n=2,481

Artistic Development and Practice

Application Question #2

> How will this project:
> - contribute to your, or your group's, artistic development
> - advance artistic practice?

For analyses, this question was divided into two parts:

1. How will this project: contribute to your, or your group's, artistic development.

   For the analysis, "artistic development" was defined as: **The artistic development of the artists/Specific to the project /Related to the skills and knowledge of the recipient for the project and for themselves**

2. How will this project: advance artistic practice?

   For the analysis, "artistic practice" was defined as: **Benefitting the wider community/artistic field of practice (e.g., by bringing something new to practice, pushing boundaries, benefiting other artists)**

Key Findings – Artistic Development

Expected Contribution to Artistic Development

Overall, the analysis reveals artists expected the grant to help with their artistic development in a multitude of ways. The most common way was to **help them complete a work they had outlined/conceived of or started** (29%). Almost as many wrote that **the financial support would allow them to devote more of their time to their art** (27%) (thereby helping them develop as artists in a "practice makes perfect" way).

For **one quarter** (24%) of sampled recipients, the funding would contribute to their artistic development by **expanding their professional network or engage in collaborations specific to the project.**
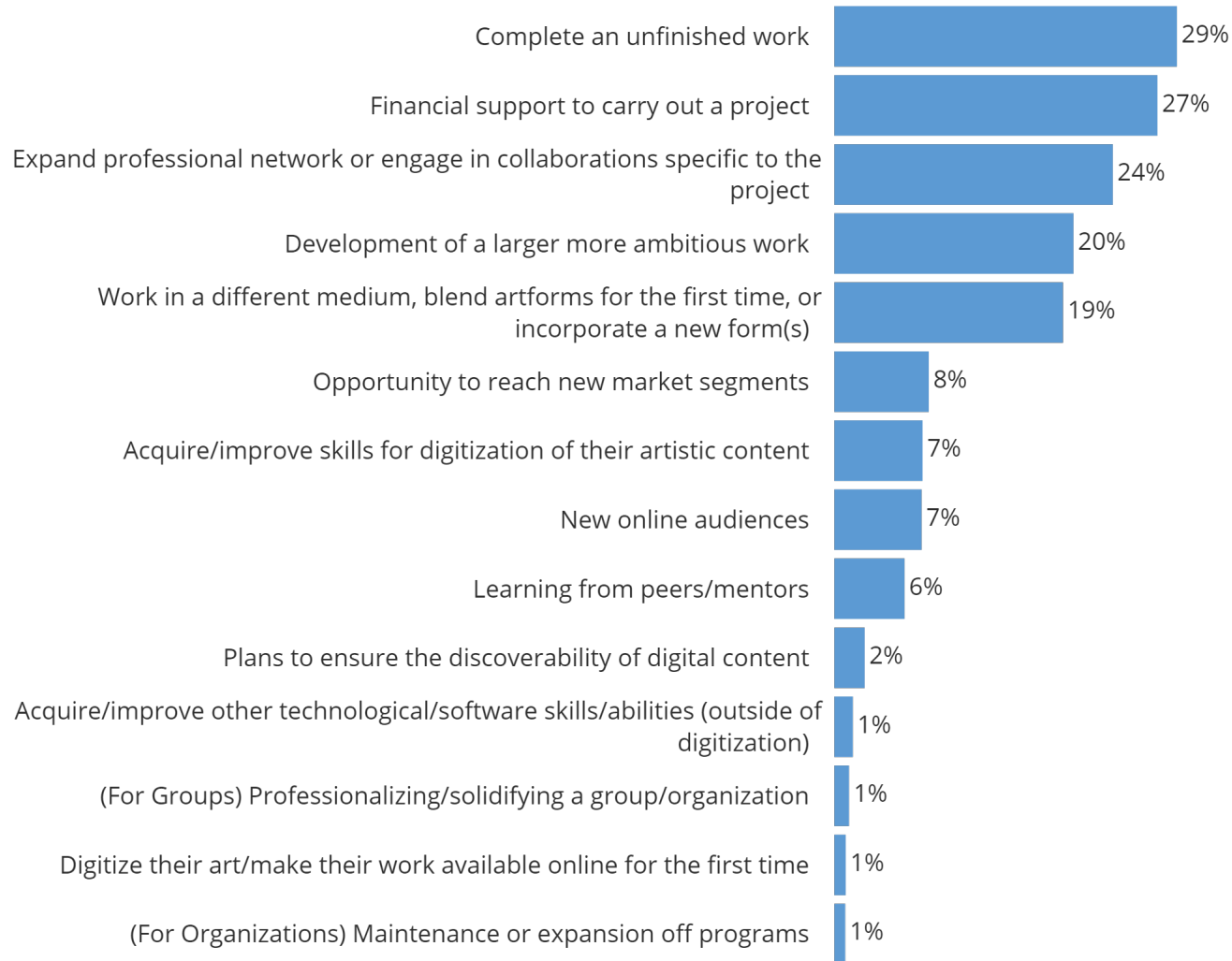
One-fifth (20%) of sampled recipients expected to use the funding to develop **a larger more ambitious work**.

There were also many other ways in which the grants were expected to contribute to one's artistic development (e.g., reaching new markets, improvement of digitization skills).

Artistic Development and Practice

Analysis of Artistic Development

Sub-group analysis

Category	%
Complete an unfinished work	29%
Financial support to carry out a project	27%
Expand professional network or engage in collaborations specific to the project	24%
Development of a larger more ambitious work	20%
Work in a different medium, blend artforms for the first time, or incorporate a new form(s)	19%
Opportunity to reach new market segments	8%
Acquire/improve skills for digitization of their artistic content	7%
New online audiences	7%
Learning from peers/mentors	6%
Plans to ensure the discoverability of digital content	2%
Acquire/improve other technological/software skills/abilities (outside of digitization)	1%
(For Groups) Professionalizing/solidifying a group/organization	1%
Digitize their art/make their work available online for the first time	1%
(For Organizations) Maintenance or expansion off programs	1%

- **Groups and organizations** are more likely to **expand their professional network** or **engage in collaborations** when compared to the overall average (38% and 35% vs. 24%) respectively.

- **"Concept to Realization"** recipients are more likely to say indicate that the project will **help them develop a larger more ambitious work** compared to the "Research and Creation" component applications (28% vs 15%).

- Those in the **"Multidisciplinary"** field of practice are more likely to indicate that the funding will allow them to **expand their professional network** or **engage in collaborations** in specific collaborations for their project (35% vs 24%).

- Recipients in the **"Literature"** field of practice are more likely to indicate that this project will **help them complete an unfinished work** (40% vs 29% overall).

Q. How will this project: • contribute to your, or your group's, artistic development? • advance artistic practice? n=2,481

Key Findings – Artistic Practice

Expected Contributions to Artistic Practice

A total of 610 sampled recipients wrote about how their project could potentially advance their artistic practice. That is, the field of practice in general, and/or other artists.

A review of these applications found that the most popular theme revolved around **allowing for artistic experimentation**. For example, the **use of technology in a new and innovative way**.

Another popular theme was the creation of a project that will lead to **expanded professional networks**, or **increased engagement in artistic collaborations**, to benefit the artistic practice/wider community of artists (e.g., the synergistic results that could come from having artists with different skills, experiences and cultural background work together to create something new or create an artistic network to engage with and share their work online).

Artistic Development and Practice

Selected Quotations – Artistic Practice

"Artistically, the constraint of producing artwork within the parameters of communicating an equation is an interesting challenge: simple concepts may be the most difficult to express visually. I'm interested in tackling quantum physics' mathematical concepts in an artist's book, using geometry and colour to express ideas in new artistic ways..."

"...It will also aid us in engendering collective discussions with our extended artistic community around the possibilities for art to adapt to social uncertainties while resisting media-enforced propaganda trying to form an economic hegemony by taking advantage of this uncertainty."

"...This project represents a celebration of a decade of work and the beginning of a new phase that extends the reach of the work and allows for the fertile and vibrant Scarborough spoken word community to reach national and international audiences."

"...It also opens paths for expanding the international profile of artists on both sides of the U.S./Canadian border, encouraging and rewarding international artistic exchanges.   We see Gilgamesh + Enkidu as a model for our company's mission to bring together art forms from diverse traditions into a space of exchange, contemplation and celebration..."

"... Working with clay, glazes, and firing opens many more complicated questions around materials, origins, and processes which I hope to investigate further over the course of this residency. I intend to continue the work of unpacking my responsibilities as an artist, rethinking the way materials are processed and taking into account the true costs of the work I make.   Engaging with multiple craft mediums requires knowledge of the materials as well as craftsmanship ability. Combining them requires taking risks and finding innovative ways of integrating materials..."

Art Forms, Styles, Genres and/or Expressions

Application Question #3

> What art form(s), style(s), genre(s) and/or expression(s) are most relevant to this application?

Analysis of Question 3 was not included in last years report. It was included this year by request of the Canada Council for the Arts. Rather than coding the responses individually, a word cloud was generated to provide and indication of the most common themes.

As could be expected, words such as "art", "music", "film" and "theater" emerge as among the most common. It is interesting to note, however, that so to does the word "experimental". And, to a lesser extent: "digital".

Art Forms, Styles, Genres and/or Expressions

Word Cloud

Project Summary

Application Question #4

(Concept to Realization Component Only)

> Provide a one-sentence summary of your project. If possible, use the format ACTIVITY, EVENT (if relevant) and DATES

For analyses, this question was divided into three parts:

1. Expected period of dissemination

2. Dissemination method

3. Analysis of online vs in-person dissemination

Key Findings

An analysis of grant application that mention a dissemination period suggest that **83% of the projects would, in whole or in part**, be disseminated in 2022, including 44% in the first half of 2022 (January to June).
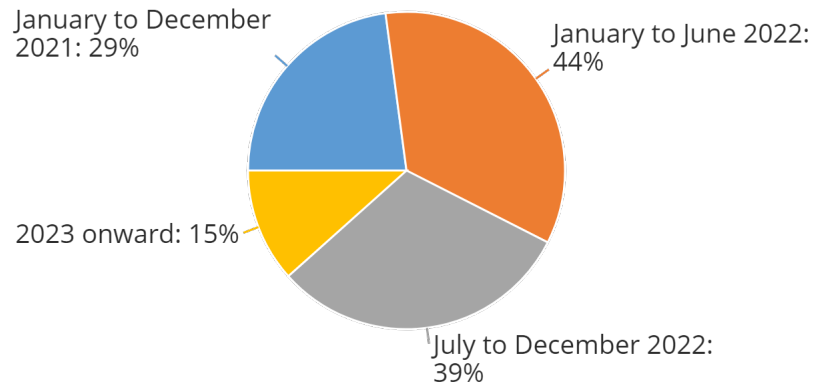
Among the dissemination methods, **live performances** (e.g., concert, dance, theatre) (30%) and **screening to audiences and festivals** (29%) are the most common. It is important to note, however, that live performances can take place online as well as in-person.

Of the 774 sample recipients who indicated whether their work would be shared online, in-person, or both, **86% of recipients expected to do so in-person**, while 8% expected to disseminate their work online, and 6% envisioned utilizing both in-person and online dissemination methods.

Project Summary

Dissemination Time and Method

Dissemination Method
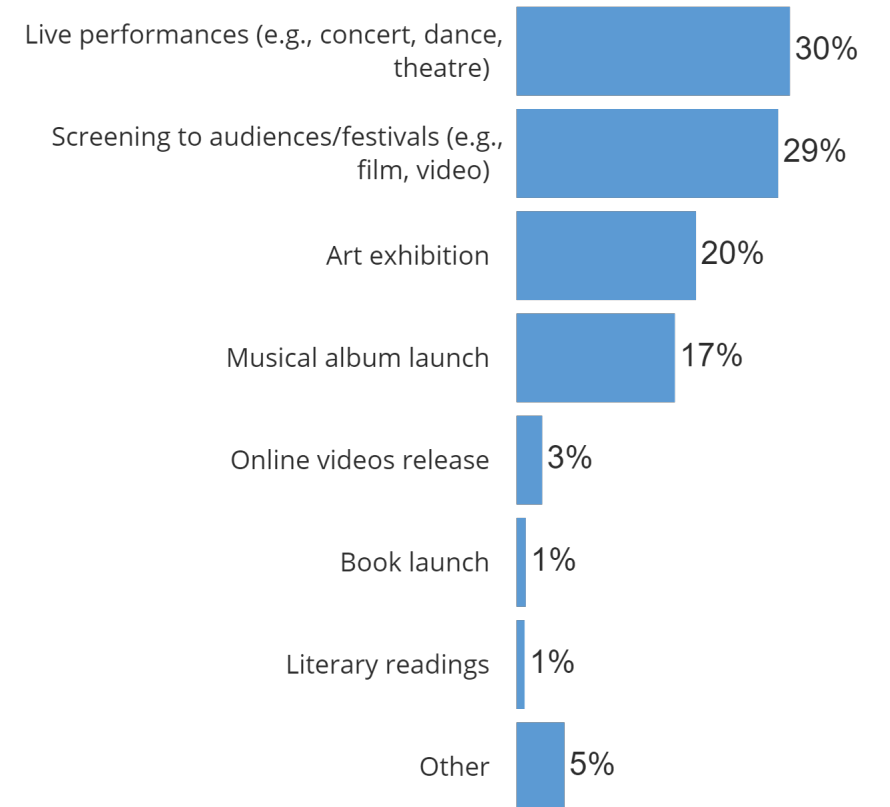
Expected Period of Dissemination

January to December 2021: 29%

January to June 2022: 44%

2023 onward: 15%

July to December 2022: 39%

n = 774 (includes only applications that included a dissemination method)

Dissemination Method	Percentage
Live performances (e.g., concert, dance, theatre)	30%
Screening to audiences/festivals (e.g., film, video)	29%
Art exhibition	20%
Musical album launch	17%
Online videos release	3%
Book launch	1%
Literary readings	1%
Other	5%

Analysis of Online Vs. In-Person Dissemination

Out of 774 sampled recipients who mentioned a dissemination method, it was possible to determine whether it included online vs. in-person dissemination, or a combination: 8% said they would disseminate using an online platform, 86% mentioned in-person, while 6% describe both online and in-person dissemination.

n = 774 (includes only applications that included a dissemination method)

Q. Provide a one-sentence summary of your project. If possible, use the format ACTIVITY, EVENT (if relevant) and DATES.

Project Summary

Examples of Online Platforms

A review of application data reveals that recipients did not provide details about the technical nature of online platforms (e.g., YouTube). Rather, they talked about this aspect in more general way, as indicated below:

- *To curate an exhibition of Canadian Ceramics to take place during an **online conference event**: The Ceramics Congress in May 2021.*

- *To produce all images for the graphic novel "The Face King Chronicles: Volume One" for **online publication** by April 2023.*

- *To present a **virtual reading and webinar** with Stephanie Roberts, Annick MacAskill, David O'Meara, and Zoe Imani Sharpe on November 28, 2020.*

- *To create a **virtual reality experience available online** to those with a computer for a one year duration starting August 2nd 2021.*

- *To create the illustrated artist's book "Deaf Can-adians" and accompanying ASL/LSQ videos for **online exhibition** in Montreal between 2021-2022.*

- *To create a **virtual and immersive multidisciplinary artistic** journey around the mini-album 'Crépuscule', presented on the web from March 2022.*

- *To create two AI-generated video artwork series of Digital Ripples to be sold on **Non-Fungible Token markets.***

- *To create Season 4 of the fiction podcast, "Confessions of a New Grad," to be **published on all podcast platforms weekly**, premiering April 3rd, 2023.*

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