

# STEP INTO THE ARTS

## FINAL REPORT



LOTTERY FUNDED



## Contents

About Youth Scotland	3	Impact	15 - 19
The brief from Creative Scotland	3	Examples of projects supported	20 - 22
Creative Scotland's approach	4	Showcasing work	23
Youth Scotland's approach	4	Key learnings from applications	24 - 25
The Youth Panel	5	Key learnings from the process	25 - 27
The training	5 - 6	Recommendations	28 - 29
About Step into the Arts	7	Conclusion	29
Screening and decision making	8		
Feedback from the panel	9		
Applicant data	10 - 14		

## About Youth Scotland

Youth Scotland is the national charity supporting the delivery of community-based youth work. Our range of projects and services support a membership network of 611 grassroots organisations who run over 2,100 youth groups in diverse communities across Scotland, from small rural and island community groups to large urban projects. Youth Scotland member groups work with over 103,000 young people aged 5 – 25 years old, who are in turn supported by over 11,300 passionate and committed youth workers and volunteers.

## The brief from Creative Scotland

In late 2022 we were successful in a Creative Scotland invitation to manage a programme of youth-led funding for young people's creative development in 2023. The brief from Creative Scotland was:

**‘Building on our previous youth-led funding, we want a partner who will develop a fund with national reach and art-form spread that focuses on supporting young people's creative ambitions and project ideas, helping them to take their next steps in their own creative development.’**

The fund would distribute **£65,000** to young people, with **£15,000** ringfenced for projects that incorporated film.



## Creative Scotland's approach to youth-led funding

Creative Scotland's approach to youth-led funding aligned closely with that of Youth Scotland, and emphasises the following principles:

- **Open** – We believe that children and young people have the right to access funding for their own creativity and to receive the appropriate support they might need to do this.
- **Trust** – We trust children and young people to make their own decisions and to design funding processes that reflect this.
- **Celebrate** - We value children and young people's creativity, whatever stage they are at and whatever they go on to do next.

Some further context was provided on [Time to Shine](#), Creative Scotland's National Youth Arts Strategy, and their previous youth-led funds which include: [Nurturing Talent Fund](#); [Nurturing Talent Fund: New Routes](#); and [Access All Arts](#).

## Youth Scotland's approach to youth-led funding

The key aspects of Youth Scotland's approach to youth-led funding programmes are:

- **Inclusivity and accessibility** – we work with our network of youth groups to ensure young people from a diverse range of backgrounds are able to participate in our opportunities. We ensure that young people whose voices are not often heard are present on our panels.
- **Empowering young people** – our Young Grantmakers opportunities start with a programme of group formation, training and personal development to ensure that young people are confident to participate and make decisions, wherever they are starting from.
- **Youth work approach** – our staff of trained youth workers create fun, engaging and safe training spaces, and show young people that they are valued.
- **Accrediting learning** – young people who take part complete a Dynamic Youth Award (SCQF Level 3) qualification.



## The Youth Panel

Youth Scotland recruited a team of 14 young people to form the Youth Panel, all with an interest in the creative arts, from 6 different youth groups. The group included five 14-year-olds, six 15-year-olds, a 23-year-old, a 24-year-old and a 25-year-old. There were five young people who identify as female, three who identify as male, five who identify as non-binary, and one who preferred not to share their gender. Four of the young people have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. One is from an ethnic minority community. They joined us from Glasgow, Blantyre, Hawick, and Edinburgh. Younger participants were supported by their local youth workers.

## The Training

The panel first met over a weekend on 24 and 25 February 2023 at the National Sports Training Centre Inverclyde. The weekend was delivered as a residential opportunity to make it possible for young people from different parts of Scotland to attend, and to increase group cohesion at the outset.

The training was a bespoke version of our iLead framework, which is designed to increase young people's everyday leadership skills including communication, teamwork, and decision making. The first day also included introductions and activities to support young people to get to know each other and become comfortable in the space.

Youth Scotland facilitators introduced the group to the brief, and some of the learnings Creative Scotland had shared from their previous rounds of funding. Young people spent some time considering why the arts were important to them and other young people, and this helped to form the fund criteria. The name 'Step into the Arts' was inspired by a learning from Creative Scotland that young people who applied to previous rounds of funding could be broadly split into two groups: those who were in an early stage of their creative journey, or taking their first steps, and those who were more experienced and looking to progress into their next steps.







## About Step into the Arts

Step into the Arts was a youth-led fund to provide opportunities and support for young people to get involved in the arts, especially young people who might not usually be able to access them.

The fund was divided into two strands:

- **First Steps into the Arts** – for young people who have some, a little or no experience with the arts, and want to explore them further
- **Next Steps into the Arts** – for young people who have experience in the arts, want to improve their practice, and may be considering a creative career

## Fund Criteria

All projects were required to be completely youth-led – the idea had to come from the young person or young people; they had to decide on what to put in the application and carry out the project if they were successful. We were also looking out for projects that met one or more of the criteria below:

- Enable young people to access the arts who might otherwise face barriers
- Use arts to support young people's self-expression
- Use arts to support young people's mental health and wellbeing
- Use arts to get young people's voices and perspectives heard
- Will have a lasting impact on the young people doing the project

## Receiving Applications

The fund was launched in late March 2023. We held two online information sessions for anyone who was considering applying which were attended by **35** people. These were both also attended by members of the Youth Panel who spoke about what had inspired Step into the Arts. The fund closed in early May 2023 after receiving **107** applications.



LOTTERY FUNDED

## Screening Process

Before the applications were shared with the Youth Panel, Youth Scotland staff screened them for eligibility and removed those that were ineligible. **5** applications were deemed ineligible at this stage for reasons including: key details on the application form missing; application was not for a creative arts activity; and applications for travel outside of Scotland.

Youth Scotland staff then went through a further screening process, removing applications that scored the lowest for being youth-led. This meant removing any applications where it was not evident that young people were involved in devising the project and writing the application or where they would not be taking ownership over delivering it. **38** further applications were removed at this stage.

## Decision Making Process

**64** applications were passed over to the Youth Panel for review. The decision-making process was undertaken at another residential weekend. Some time was allowed to refresh the Panel's memory on what they had set out as the criteria and aims of the fund, as well as to re-establish group dynamics and methods for decision making. The group then read through the applications and chose their top three to five and their bottom three to five, bearing in mind the fund criteria. Where most young people had put an application in their top list, those were placed in a 'yes' pile, those that the majority had in their bottom list, were placed in a 'no' pile. The 'maybe' applications were discussed between the group, and a decision was reached. Once all applications had been discussed, the group reviewed how much funding had been allocated, and moved applications between piles accordingly.





## Feedback from the Panel

"I enjoyed working with other people and communicating."

"I enjoyed creating new connections with people from different backgrounds and being open to different opportunities."

"I enjoyed having a place to go rather than sit in my house all day."

"The two leaders Stuart and Laura went above and beyond and make our days exciting. Thank you so much!!!!!!"

"Talking openly about my opinions to everyone made me feel better about myself."

"It has made me have an opportunity to be open and more confident about myself and how I express myself to my community and youth group"

"[It was] the best opportunity that I have been given has changed my life and made me continue down a better path."

"I even learned more about myself, like personal development, more skills... and friends I met. It really gave me a boost, it made me feel great about myself, to know I was feeling heard."

"It was a big first step for me... I was absolutely petrified!... When we started working in different groups, like I was away from my group, it started slowly growing on me like 'they're feeling the same way as well'... Now it's built up to having new relationships and still talking to them now!"

## Applicant Data

We received a total of **107** applications, **46** of which were from individual young people, with **61** coming from groups of young people. **10** projects involved film.

Category	All Applicants		Successful Applicants	
	Total number	Total requested	Total number	Total awarded
Total First Steps Individuals	13	£8,405	10	£7,132
Total First Steps Groups	30	£48,222	12	£11,510
Total Next Steps Individuals	33	£28,657.8	14	£20,934
Total Next Steps Groups	31	£86,252.75	9	£25,424
<b>Total Applicants</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>£171,537.6</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>65,000</b>





## Age of Applicants

	All Applicants		Successful Applicants	
Age	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
5 to 9	10	9%	4	9%
10 to 13	24	22%	11	24%
14 to 16	18	17%	13	29%
17 to 20	23	21%	9	20%
21 to 25	29	27%	8	18%
26+	2	2%	0	0%
Did not specify	1	1%	0	0%



## Applicants by Local Authority Area

Local Authority	All Applicants		Successful Applicants	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Aberdeen City	1	1%	0	0%
Aberdeenshire	4	4%	2	4%
Angus	2	2%	0	0%
Argyll & Bute	1	1%	0	0%
City of Edinburgh	11	10%	6	13%
Clackmannanshire	2	2%	1	2%
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	0	0%	0	0%
Dumfries and Galloway	6	6%	1	2%
Dundee City	5	5%	2	4%
East Ayrshire	2	2%	1	2%
East Dunbartonshire	1	1%	0	0%
East Lothian	0	0%	0	0%
East Renfrewshire	0	0%	1	2%
Falkirk	0	0%	0	0%
Fife	11	10%	9	20%
Glasgow City	28	26%	8	18%

Local Authority	All Applicants		Successful Applicants	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Highland	4	4%	0	0%
Inverclyde	0	0%	0	0%
Midlothian	0	0%	0	0%
Moray	0	0%	0	0%
North Ayrshire	1	1%	0	0%
North Lanarkshire	2	2%	0	0%
Orkney	1	1%	1	2%
Perth and Kinross	0	0%	0	0%
Renfrewshire	1	1%	0	0%
Scottish Borders	9	8%	5	11%
Shetland Islands	3	3%	1	2%
South Ayrshire	0	0%	0	0%
South Lanarkshire	6	6%	3	7%
Stirling	1	1%	1	2%
West Dunbartonshire	5	5%	3	7%
West Lothian	0	0%	0	0%



## Art Forms Applied For

Art forms (primary form listed)	All Applicants		Successful Applicants	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Drawing and painting	22	21%	10	22%
Pottery	1	1%	0	0%
Performing arts (including theatre, musical theatre and drag)	16	15%	7	16%
Photography	7	7%	4	9%
Mural and graffiti	5	5%	4	9%
Clothes making/ fashion/ textiles with henna/ jewellery making	8	7%	2	4%
Craft	2	2%	0	0%
Film	4	4%	3	7%
Mixed Media	14	13%	5	11%

Art forms (primary form listed)	All Applicants		Successful Applicants	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Gaming	1	1%	0	0%
Makeup	1	1%	1	2%
Comics/zines	3	3%	1	2%
Circus	4	4%	0	0%
Dance	3	3%	2	4%
Audio (including podcasts and sound pieces)	2	2%	2	4%
Music (including playing instruments, singing, and sound)	13	12%	4	9%
Poetry	1	1%	0	0%

## Barriers Listed by Applicants

When applying, young people identified the barriers they faced when accessing the arts, whether that was cost, identifying as part of an under-represented community, or experiencing physical or mental health conditions. To create the table here we summarised these into broad categories and selected the two primary barriers mentioned by each young person where more than one or two were mentioned.

Barriers	All Applicants		Successful Applicants	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Cost	55	51%	24	53%
Location	22	21%	9	20%
Mental health	7	7%	2	4%
Being from an ethnic minority culture	7	7%	4	9%
Immigrant status	3	3%	3	7%
Neurodivergence	18	17%	9	20%
Not in mainstream education	5	5%	2	4%
Disabilities	2	2%	0	0%
Medical condition	5	5%	1	2%
Care experience	1	1%	1	2%
Identifying as LGBT+	6	6%	2	4%
Homelessness	2	2%	2	4%
Domestic violence	1	1%	1	2%

## Impact of the Fund

To assess the impact of the fund, we shared a survey with all grantees after 6 months, with both quantitative and qualitative questions. We received a total of **32** responses to the survey, which was **71%** of grantees.

- 97%** said the funding had helped them to learn new creative skills
- 97%** said the funding had helped them to overcome barriers to getting involved with creative activities
- 88%** said the funding had a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing, the remaining 12% were not sure
- 75%** said the funding had helped them to get their voice and perspective heard, the remaining 25% were not sure
- 87%** said they had plans for more creative projects in the future

Dungeons and Dragons inspired design for a mural that a group of young people from Connect Alloa painted in their youth centre.





Zulekha, aged 9, from Glasgow, with part of her painting portfolio

## What was the most important difference that the funding made to you and why?

"The project existing has had a lot of individuals speak out about their shared experiences around the accessibility of the film industry. Hearing these voices has filled us with hope for change."

"I think the biggest difference for me has been the ability to work in groups. Before this project I would always ask if I could work alone. I never felt like anyone listened to me and I never felt included so I just stayed quiet. I learned how to manage in a group. I felt listened to, included and respected. It showed me that groups can be fun!"

"I am able to pursue my passion of music which was impossible due to financial constraints. The financial help I got also helped me massively with my mental health as buying the equipment didn't feel like something I shouldn't do."

"It has been a huge learning curve, liaising with different organisations and individuals to do outreach for my project."

"It was really fun to create our own musical and be a part of a project from beginning to end. It made us all feel proud getting to share the work with our parents and families at the end."



## What was the most important difference that the funding made to you and why?

"Evie has sold 2 pieces of art work in a local exhibition, which made, Evie and us, SO proud!"

"My confidence has grown, I can independently attend this theatre class as it's a child development focused class, they have a lot of understanding around children's development and differences (This is helpful as I'm autistic). I feel accepted at my theatre class and don't feel so unusual amongst theatrical children and adults"

"It allowed us to receive attention from both a larger audience, including two sell-out nights, as well as attracting significant attention from media and reviewers and opening the discussion surrounding toxic masculinity and mental health that we wanted to explore. From the back of our funding, we have received an opportunity to develop a subsequent project."

"It was the first art studio I have ever been too and as soon as I stepped into it I knew this is the place I wanted to be and wanted to work in when I'm older. I sometimes find school and writing and focusing hard but to be surrounded by all the different colours and textures and things I could try and practice and make made me so happy... I felt that's where I belong and it's now ok that I might not suit that normal school life because I know there are art studios out there now."

Parrot in acrylic paint, by Aeryn aged 11 from Fife





Graffiti mural by Elizabeth, Evelyn and Sanna aged 10, 11, and 12 in Dumfries and Galloway

## Do you have plans for more creative projects in the future? If so, what are they?

"I want to keep getting better at SFX but now I want to try so much more art projects, pottery, painting, sculpting, jewellery making. There is so much I want to try now."

"We intend to bring more original stories exploring contemporary socio-political issues to the stage. We are currently working on an anthology show."

"To carry on learning. Going to do some print making at a local printmakers."

"I am suggesting to more art projects with my youth group about their views on art"

"I hope to make short films and documentaries."

"I have a videography project planned where I will challenge myself to create an engaging short film about a topic I have not yet decided on."

"We would like to run an upcycling project to upcycle clothes."

## Do you have any further comments?

"We appreciate the friendly application process that made it a task we could approach as a youth-led group with little experience in funding applications"

"It's amazing. It has enabled, Evie to get out of the house. Being just Evie and Laura, Evie's confidence in her own ability has increased. She still has problems and anxiety, but she lives her art."

"It was a very positive experience for me, and helped to boost my self esteem."

"My theatre group is a class I look forward to every Monday. I've liked meeting new people and I have got to know different children and adults, developing social skills that don't come so naturally to me. I've started attending school a few hours a week now and know people from theatre class at the school."

"We loved receiving the funding as it helped us experience a new thing. The experience was wonderful and an experience that we wouldn't normally forget and it was outside the town of Hawick which is something that we would never of been able to do without this funding."

"I'm really grateful and I even have signed up to a bronze art award"



Evangeline, aged 10, from Fife, in a mask she created on her special effects course





Evie, aged 20, getting ready to do some sewing in the studio

## Examples of projects supported

### Developing visual art skills

"I have Down Syndrome and Autism, and I find life and stuff really difficult. There are things I like and things I don't like. I like art. I liked art at school and then I started doing some art sessions with a local artist, Laura Drever. Yes. I would like to learn more and do more art. I like Laura and going to her studio. I would like more colours, paints, oil pastels, blue and yellow. I need money for these."

### Learning more about special effects makeup

"My project is to learn about prosthetic and SFX makeup. I want to learn because I have watched youtube videos on these for years and I love it. I love how it can be scary or how it can change the shape of someone's face. I can create an injury and this is what is used on TV programs like Casualty. You can be whoever or whatever you want to be. You can be monster, a snowman, Baby Yoda, the Grinch, the list is endless. I am so interested in doing it, that I experiment with white tack and makeup in my bedroom. I make boils and cuts with these; I even scared my grandma once because she thought it was real! I have also done bruises on my face and helped my cousin with her Halloween makeup. When I am doing this, it helps me feel happy and relaxed."



## Examples of projects supported

### Taking a play to the Edinburgh Fringe

"Our project is 'VARMINTS', a stage Western centred around the conversation of mental health and deconstructing the arguably toxic iconography of the cowboy i.e. the 'strong, silent type.' It is a comedy-drama that at first glance appears to take place in the Old West, with the audience witnessing a series of tense interactions between violent gunslingers in a ramshackle saloon, only for their reality to be shattered by the arrival of a man in a tracksuit carrying a gym bag over his shoulder. Slowly we learn that these rugged men aren't vicious and violent legends of old, that this 'Western' isn't for real but rather a tragic, alcohol-infused tribute to their dead friend, of whose passing they are each struggling to emotionally process, opting to dress up as cowboys and act out his unproduced scripts rather than sit down and have a real, honest conversation about how they all feel. We want to stage this at the Edinburgh Fringe."

### Online fashion exhibition

"We want to create a digital fashion exhibition inspired by movies that have an underlying theme people can relate to and be inspired by. We will design and make the fashion clothes ourselves."



VARMINTS, a play by Ben, Chris and Alistair (all aged 25) from Edinburgh



A social media update from the Film Cult, an organisation set up to support filmmakers starting out in the industry who don't have access to equipment.

## Examples of projects supported

### Supporting filmmakers with equipment

"In order to lower the expensive barrier to entry into filmmaking we are building an equipment share, similar to existing tool libraries, in order to loan out filmmaking equipment to low budget productions, students, young people and solo filmmakers unable to afford access to equipment. By doing this we will increase the accessibility to the equipment needed to learn, experiment and develop filmmakers of all backgrounds in Scotland."

### Taking part in theatre workshops

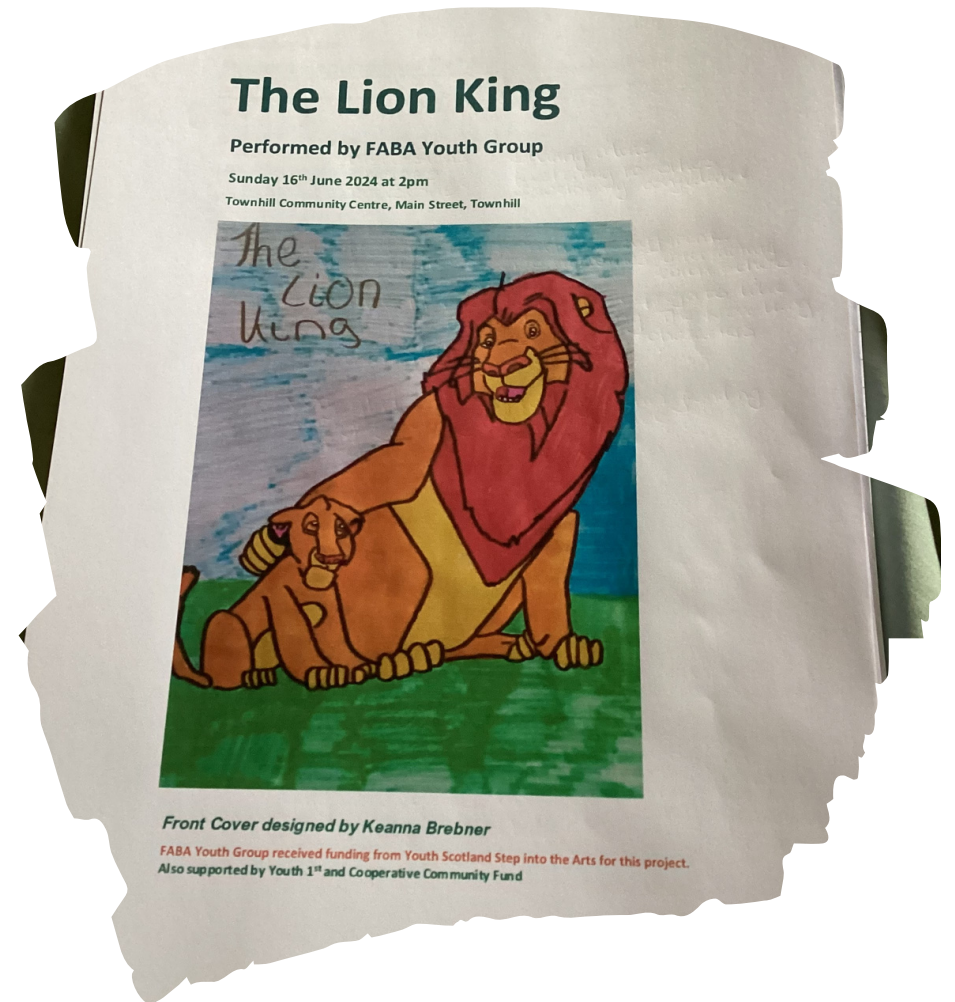
"I would love to go to theatre workshops in my town. I have been to a taster workshop before and it was so fun being different characters. Everyone says I am very theatrical and I enjoy performing and making people laugh. I want to be on the stage! I want to do theatre shows in front of people, I don't feel embarrassed when I am a character I feel big and free."

## Showcasing work

We asked successful applicants whether they would want to showcase their work, and if so in what format.

- **15** said they would be interested in showcasing their work
- **12** said they were not sure
- **4** said they would like to attend a showcase but wouldn't be comfortable sharing their own work
- **1** said they would not like to attend a showcase

Of those who replied yes, **14** had a preference for an in-person showcase, and **1** was undecided between online or in person. We plan to speak with the Youth Panel and decide how best to proceed. There may be an opportunity to showcase some of the projects at our Big Ideas event in August 2024.



The front cover of 'The Lion King' programme, directed and acted by young people from Families Affected by Autism in Fife

# Key learning from young people's applications and feedback

## Barriers to participation

Young people cited a wide range of barriers to participation, with cost being the one that was mentioned most frequently. Many young people mentioned the cost of living crisis and the impact this was having on them and their family. This then meant that the cost of artistic materials, classes or travel to arts events was prohibitive. The other two barriers that were most frequently mentioned were location, with young people's local areas not providing much opportunity to engage with the arts, and lack of support for neurodiverse young people.

## Art forms

A wide range of different creative techniques was represented across all the applications, broadly falling into 17 categories. The most popular was 'drawing and painting' for which many young people were requesting paints, pencils, pastels and other equipment to pursue their own visual art projects. This was followed by performing arts, mixed media, and music.

## Geographical spread

We received applications from 22 out of Scotland's 32 local authorities. The highest proportion of these were from Glasgow (28), followed by Edinburgh (11), and Fife (11). However, applications were not only from young people based in the central belt, with the fund attracting young people from Highland, Orkney, Shetland, Aberdeenshire, Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway. This reflects the wide geographical spread of Youth Scotland member youth groups, which was one of the key avenues through which the fund was promoted.

## Progression routes

For many grantees the fund has led to further steps into the arts, beyond their funded project. This includes young people: selling their work; starting arts based qualifications; discovering new creative interests they plan to try; securing employment; and devising and securing support for further projects.



## The power of creativity

In many applications, and in their feedback surveys, young people highlighted how creative arts provided a space or vehicle where they were able to express themselves and celebrate their differences rather than feeling alienated for them. There were several examples of young people who had struggled in mainstream school but found that engaging in group arts activities was more accessible to them. Many mentioned the positive and calming impact that creative arts had on their mental health, or on understanding their neurodivergence. Young people from groups that are often marginalised (for example, those who identify as LGBT+, are immigrants, are from ethnic minority communities) used the arts to explore and process the feelings that come with this or had found spaces and groups of friends where they felt they belonged through the creative arts. Though this is not a surprise to Youth Scotland or Creative Scotland, it is an important reminder of the power of joyful, creative expression in developing young people's sense of self and supporting their wellbeing.

## Key learning from the process

### Recruitment

Our national opportunities for young people's programmes are promoted to our network of member youth groups, and usually fill up fairly quickly. The creative arts angle of this programme seemed to be even more of a hook for young people and groups, with lots expressing interest in joining. Since we had limited spaces we were unable to host all groups. We saw a diverse range of young people signing up, with particular representation of the LGBT+ community. One challenge we did experience with the recruitment was the age split – most of the Youth Panel members were 14 and 15, with three aged 23 – 25. This worked for some of the older participants who took on a leadership role and helped support the younger ones, but one participant felt the programme was pitched too young for them as a result.

## **Impact of Youth Panel training**

The feedback from the Youth Panel training was extremely positive, with almost all young people indicating that their confidence had increased. Young people who were too shy to speak to anyone at the beginning of the first panel weekend were leading group discussions by the end. The group also retained many of their learnings from the first weekend into the second, despite there being nearly three months' gap between the two. Feedback about the training from Creative Scotland staff and supporting youth workers around the training was also positive. One challenge associated with this is that after the first day of training, which is full of energisers, games and other activities, the fund design and decision making can feel less exciting. Youth Scotland staff use a variety of approaches to keep young people engaged through the process but if we had more time, there may be additional activities we could explore for this part of the process as well.

## **Youth worker input**

It is extremely valuable to have local youth workers present as they have a pre-existing relationship with their young people and are a reassuring presence for those who are nervous about taking part. This also means we are able to reach young people who would probably not otherwise attend if they did not have their youth worker present. However, youth workers' opinions can also influence their young people, which can impact on the decisions they take.

## **Understanding of the brief**

Creative Scotland provided context on where this project sat within their strategy and in relation to their previous youth-led funding offers. Youth Scotland took the decision to share some of this context with the Youth Panel, which then influenced the design of the fund. Creative Scotland had been hoping for the panel to start from more of a blank slate, and to see what they would devise without this influence. It is possible that a further check-in between Youth Scotland and Creative Scotland before the initial panel weekend, with Youth Scotland running through the plans ahead of time would have averted this. We greatly appreciated the trust and independence Creative Scotland gave us with regards to how to develop the fund, but equally wanted ensure we met the aims and generated the learnings they had set out to achieve.



LOTTERY FUNDED

## Timings

Good youth participation work takes a significant investment of time, particularly when working with young people who might not otherwise be accessing these opportunities. The brief for Step into the Arts was broad, which required extra time when devising the fund as young people did not have many parameters to start from. Young people, Youth Scotland facilitators, and Creative Scotland expressed that the first weekend in particular could have benefitted from being a day longer. The Youth Panel chose to make the upper limit of funding £3000, this meant that the amount of funding requested by all applicants was higher than we had initially anticipated. As a result, a more intensive screening process was required prior to passing applications over to the Youth Panel, in order to give them time to review all applications thoroughly. This took more Youth Scotland staff time than was initially planned for. Young people had also initially wanted the fund to be open for 10 weeks. We came to a compromise whereupon the fund was open for 5 weeks, we reviewed the level of applications, and then decided whether it was possible to open for another 5 weeks considering the capacity of Youth Scotland staff and the Youth Panel. Due to the high number of applications and the amount of funding requested, we did not reopen the fund.

## A new application process

Creative Scotland was interested in exploring a completely new application process, that would not necessarily be based on forms. Due to time constraints this was not explored with the Youth Panel, and a template form was used to develop the application process for Step into the Arts. The challenge of completely re-imagining the application process for funds would be an interesting one, but would require much more time, possibly a full day on this alone.



## Recommendations

### **More communication between Creative Scotland and Youth Scotland**

We greatly appreciated the level of autonomy Creative Scotland allowed us when developing this programme. In reviewing the context provided by Creative Scotland, we slightly misunderstood the approach they were interested in exploring, which was to start from a blank slate and see what young people developed. While Creative Scotland did convey to us that the brief was completely open, and that we were able to approach it in any way we wanted, we were influenced by the context setting materials and this impacted how we designed the programme. When working together in the future, it would be useful to check in more frequently at the outset of the programme.

### **Put measures in place to ensure a spread of ages**

Youth Scotland should consider methods of recruiting that could help ensure a more even spread of ages in the group. This could be identifying youth groups to recruit from who work with specific age ranges, or stating when recruiting that we will curate the group from those who have expressed interest with this in mind.

### **Briefing for supporting youth workers**

We often host a video call ahead of our national opportunities to ensure youth workers understand what they are bringing their young people to, and so that they can ask any questions. Going forward, it may be an idea to add something into this about what we expect from youth workers over the course of a weekend, including trying not to influence the young people's decisions as much as possible.

### **Add in a contingency budget for extra Youth Scotland staff time**

It would be useful to have a small contingency budget for extra staff time that may be spent on managing the administration of the fund, including any screening process that is necessary. This changes for each youth-led fund depending on the decisions young people make about its design. Having extra time budgeted means that if young people want to have the fund open for longer, or offer higher amounts of funding, we would have capacity to screen applications where necessary.



## More time with the Youth Panel

For future Young Grantmakers programmes where there are few parameters on the design of the fund we would recommend building in more time, possibly an extra day, to ensure the panel has time for training, and does not feel rushed when designing the fund. This would also allow more time for making the process of fund design more in depth and more creative. If the budget means it is not possible to incorporate more time for the Youth Panel to work together, then we would recommend starting with a less open ended brief. Similarly, more time with the Youth Panel would allow space to reimagine the application process, exploring more radical options for applying for funding. In a dream scenario where there were no budget constraints, we could run a residential lasting 3 – 4 days for the development of the fund, allowing time to build in all of the above.

## Conclusion

Step into the Arts was successful in the aims the Youth Panel set for the fund: to provide opportunities and support for young people to get involved in the arts, especially young people who might not usually be able to access them. The wide criteria for the fund that accepted applications from young people at the beginning of their artistic journey and those further along, led to a diverse range of projects across many different art forms. Almost all successful applicants reported improved creative skills, and a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing. The majority also said the funding helped to get their voices and perspectives heard. The Youth Panel had a similarly positive experience devising the fund and selecting the successful applicants.

We would like to say a huge thank you to the young people who took part in the Panel, and all of those who applied. It has been a pleasure to see so much creativity from across Scotland. We would also like to thank Creative Scotland for giving us the opportunity to run the programme and for being such an open and flexible partner.



LOTTERY FUNDED