



# Youth Music Stakeholder Survey 2016 Findings

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## Executive Summary

Youth Music carries out an annual stakeholder survey to inform our grant-making processes and strategy. In autumn 2016 we gathered anonymous feedback (via an online survey) from current Youth Music grantholders, as well as all those who applied for Youth Music funding during the 2015/16 financial year. Analysis of these responses helps Youth Music to shape and adapt our work in response to present needs.

The full report begins with an overview of the methodology and respondent information and is then broken down into seven sections (summarised below).

### **1. Applying for funding**

The majority of respondents were positive about the process of applying to Youth Music for funding. The majority also felt that the level of detail required to make an application was “about right”, and most applicants were happy with the level of support given during the application process.

### **2. Youth Music’s grant management**

Questions about several areas of Youth Music’s grant management processes were covered in the survey, including relationships, requirements and resources. Overall, opinions on the proportionality of grant requirements were favourable, although the results suggest that more could be done to streamline Fund A reporting requirements.

Youth Music staff are seen to be approachable and flexible with queries. A high proportion of respondents have used Youth Music publications and resources to inform their work.

When asked what Youth Music could improve about our grant-making processes, responses included suggestions related to face-to-face contact, guidance and support, communications and transparency, application and reporting requirements, technology, application turnaround times and continuation funding. A number of ideas for resources were suggested.

### **3. Youth Music’s impact**

We asked respondents how supportive Youth Music is across a number of areas. The results showed that Youth Music was most successful at supporting grantholders to improve the quality of their work. There is a demand from stakeholders for Youth Music to support longer-term organisational stability.

Respondents gave their opinions on Youth Music’s impact on their organisation and wider field of work, as well as Youth Music’s understanding of their field of work. The majority rated Youth Music’s impact and understanding in these areas consistently as ‘above average’.

### **4. The Youth Music Network**

A high percentage of respondents agreed that the Youth Music Network is a useful resource that they would recommend to other music education professionals, and 82% find the Youth Music Network newsletter useful and relevant to their work. Respondents most commonly used the Youth

Music Network for downloading resources and reading blogs.

## **5. Consultation questions**

The Stakeholder Survey asked respondents about two specific areas of practice:

- Grant adjustment policy: Youth Music reserves the right to invite applicants to apply for an amount that is higher or lower than their original request. We asked respondents for their opinions on this policy. Over three-quarters (78%) agreed that reducing a grant amount in this way was acceptable so that a greater number of grants can be made overall.
- Shared impact measurement: we provided respondents with a list of common measurement frameworks and asked them to tell us which ones they had used. The most commonly used frameworks were the ones provided in the [Youth Music Evaluation Builder](#), with a significant number of respondents reporting that they were not aware of the other frameworks provided in the list.

## **6. Closing comments**

Youth Music received a high average rating as a funder (5.95 out of 7). A number of additional comments were given about the impact of Youth Music and Youth Music funding.

## **7. Recommendations**

A series of recommendations have been provided based on the findings of the survey.

## Introduction

This report presents the findings of Youth Music’s 2016 stakeholder survey. It is structured broadly in the same order as the survey itself.

### Methodology and respondent information

An online survey consisting of a mixture of 45 questions (both open and closed) was distributed to 543 organisations, comprising all current grantholders as well as applicants who had been declined in the last financial year. 176 respondents completed the survey – a response rate of 32% (an increase from the 26% response rate of the 2015 survey). It was not compulsory for respondents to answer every question.

Respondents were asked to select one option that best described the geographical area in which they ‘usually’ operated. Responses have been gathered from across the country (figure 1), meaning that the findings from this survey are unlikely to present a significant regional bias. This was fairly representative of those awarded funding in the 2015-16 financial year, with marginal over-representation of London and Yorkshire-based grants and marginal under-representation of North West and North East-based grants.

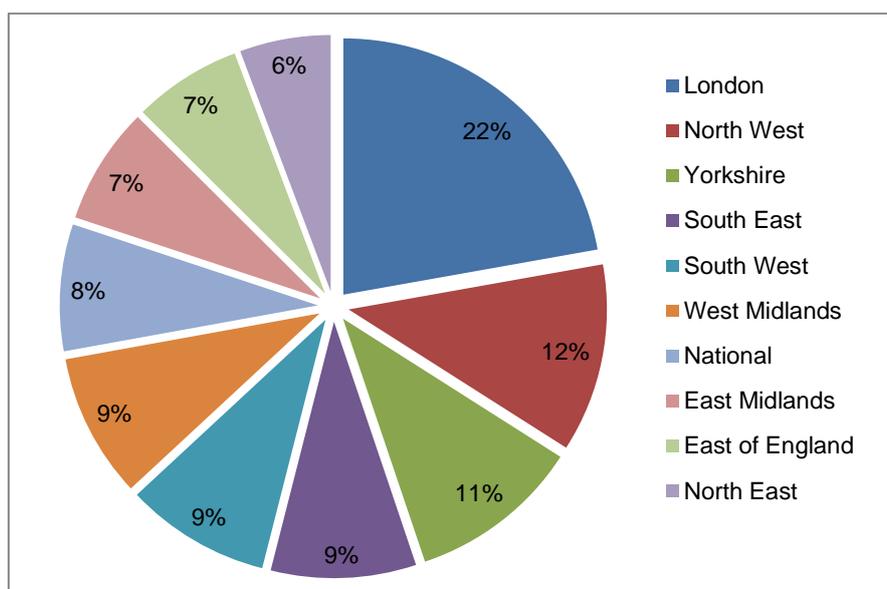


Figure 1. Respondents’ usual area of operation (n=176)

Figure 2 shows the range of turnover of organisations that completed the survey. There is a wide range of organisation size amongst Youth Music stakeholders. Almost half of total respondents have a turnover of less than £500,000, and one-quarter of less than £100,000.

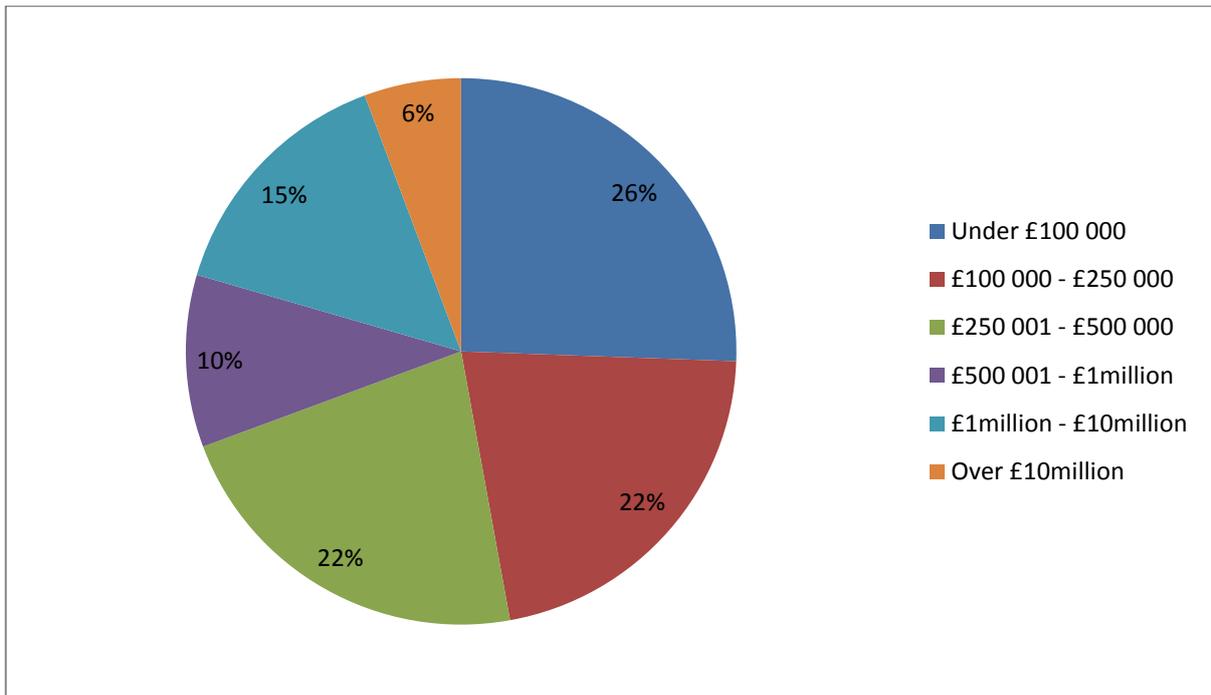


Figure 2. Respondents by organisation turnover (n=176)

Figure 3 shows that a significant proportion of respondents were from not-for-profit organisations with 52% of respondents representing registered charities, 12% from voluntary or community organisations, 11% from companies limited by guarantee and 10% from Community Interest Companies. Music Services and local authorities made up 19% of respondents, and the remaining 7% of responses came from schools and academies, children’s centres, companies limited by shares, and prisons/youth offending institutes. While this is broadly representative of organisation types awarded Youth Music funding in 2015-16 (as reported in [Youth Music’s Impact Report 2015-16](#)), registered charities are over-represented in this survey (52% as opposed to 36% overall, and companies limited by guarantee are under-represented (11% as opposed to 31% overall)).

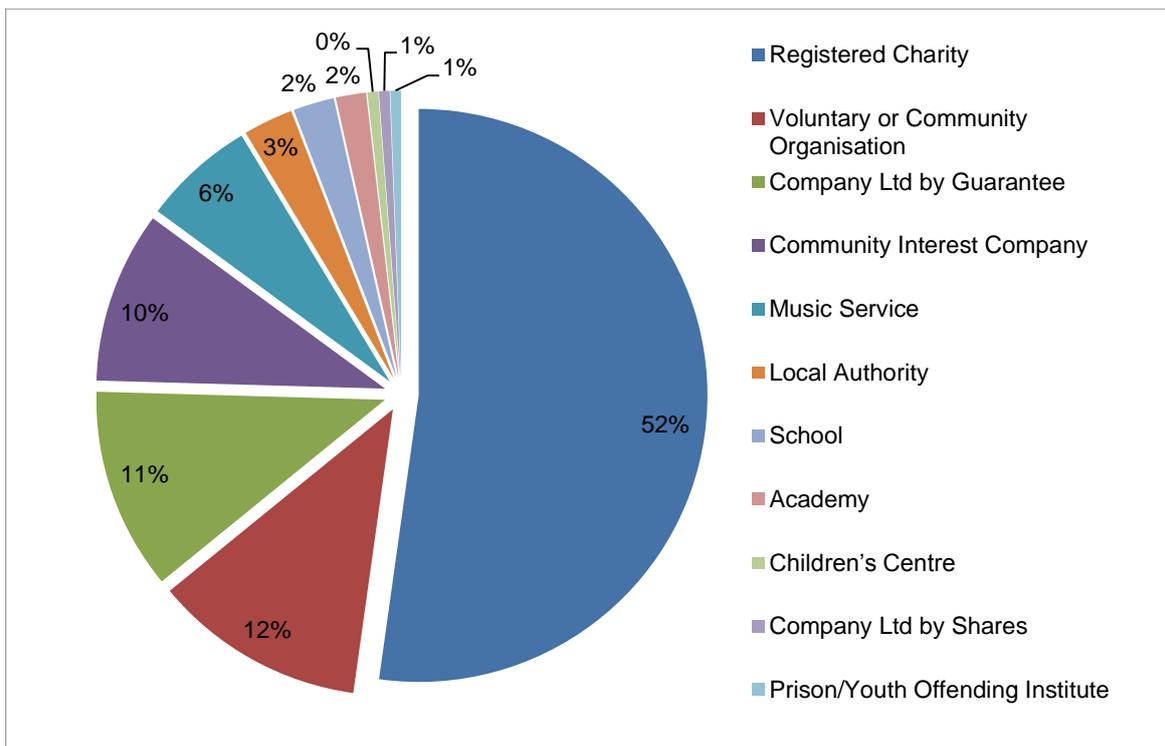


Figure 3. Respondents by organisation type (n=176)

## 1. Applying for funding

Respondents were asked how they felt about the level of detail in the application form in relation to the size of the grant they were applying for (figure 4). A significant majority - 80% of 174 respondents - felt the level of detail was 'about right'. This is consistent with last year's survey and indicates that the introduction of different funds for different sizes of grant (with proportional levels of application requirements for each fund) in 2015 is suitable for the majority of stakeholders.

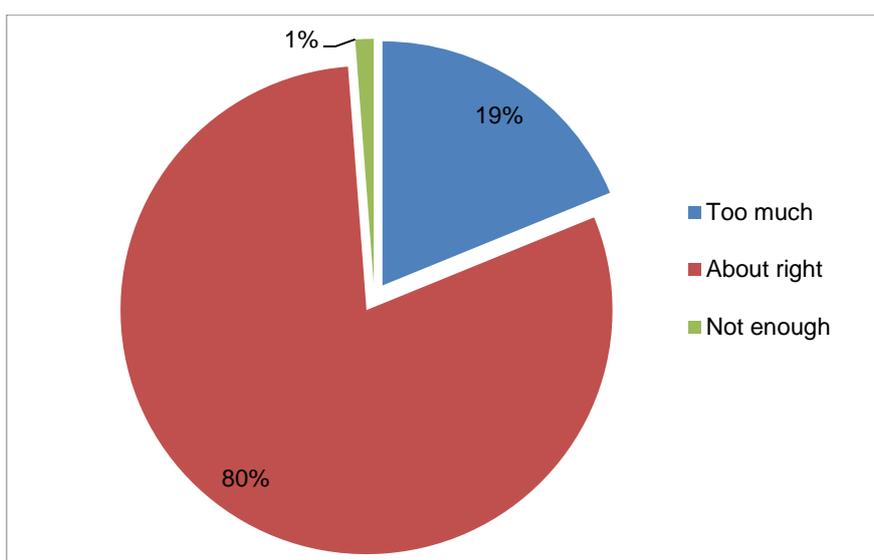


Figure 4: “What do you think about the level of detail on the application form in relation to the size of grant?”

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of support that they received on a Likert scale from 1 to 7 (1 = very poor, 4 = average and 7 = excellent). 163 chose to respond, resulting in an average of 5.27/7. The majority rated the quality of support received as above average (71%), 20% rated it average, and 9% below average. An additional 40 respondents chose to leave comments about the support they received during the application stage, with a mixture of positive and negative responses. Some commented on their experiences of contacting Youth Music with queries about the application:

*I have found the Y[outh] M[usic] funding team to be approachable, supportive, informative and informed in their responses to my questions - like they really want to help me get the grant. Very quick and friendly response to any queries.*

*There has been a varying quality of support depending on the individual spoken to at Youth Music - some members of staff are very knowledgeable and able to share information clearly.*

Youth Music provides feedback on all applications received, aiming to highlight both strengths and areas for development. We asked respondents who had previously been unsuccessful in an application (n=71) whether they agreed that the feedback they received had been useful. The majority of respondents – 55% – agreed or strongly agreed that the feedback had been useful, 21% were neutral, and 24% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

## 2. Youth Music's grant management

This section of the survey was directed at successful applicants only, and asked questions regarding their experiences of Youth Music as a grantholder.

Of the 127 respondents who answered 'yes' to being a current grantholder, there was a representation of all the ongoing grant types: Fund A (n=69), Fund B (n=44), Fund C (n=10), Youth Music Programme (n=9) and Exchanging Notes (n=4). Eleven respondents said that they currently held more than one grant.

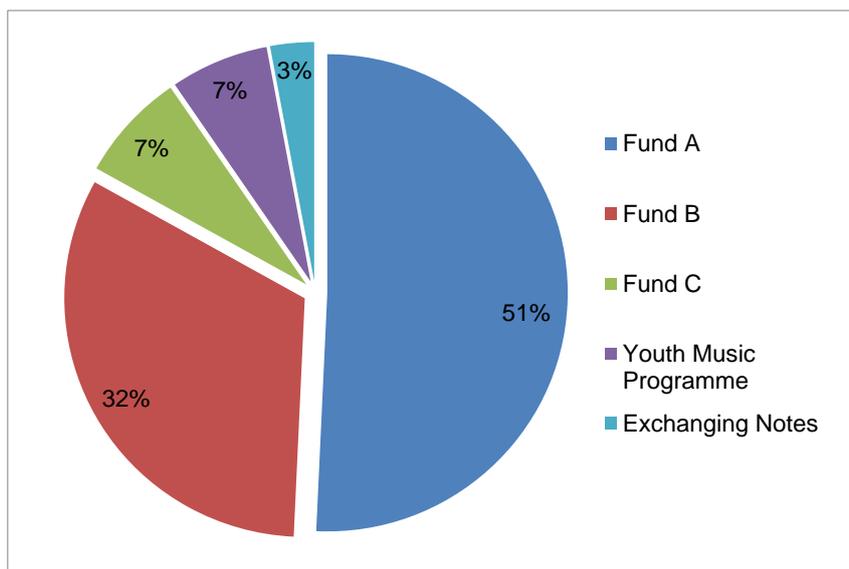


Figure 5. Current grantholders by type of grant (n=125)

### 2.1 Grant requirements

We asked all those who currently hold - or have previously held - a Youth Music grant what they thought about the proportionality of their grant requirements in relation to the size of their grant. Out of 130 respondents, 79% believed it was 'about right', with 20% feeling it was 'too much' and 1% saying it was 'not enough'. Of those who answered that the requirements were 'too much' (n=26), 20 were current or previous Fund A grantholders, which is just under a quarter of Fund A respondents. Given the emphasis Youth Music places on the outcomes approach and the impact measurement requirements this places on organisations, Youth Music should consider additional support to help Fund A grantholders with their reporting requirements. **(Recommendation 1)**.

Respondents also rated their level of agreement with statements about the evaluation process on a seven-point Likert scale. Eighty-one percent agreed or strongly agreed that the process of evaluation was useful for strengthening their organisation, and 68% agreed or strongly agreed that their evaluation skills had improved as a result of reporting to Youth Music. Sixty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed that they had been well supported with their evaluation by Youth Music staff and resources.

The new, reworded set of evaluation questions in this year's survey does not allow direct comparison with previous years, but percentages are notionally lower than for similar questions in past surveys. While it is not possible to attribute this variation to one specific factor, there has been a couple of changes which may have affected responses. Firstly, Youth Music hosted grantholder gatherings with an evaluation support session in 2015, but not in 2016. Secondly, Youth Music underwent a migration to a new online grants system in the last year, during which some refinements to evaluation reporting templates were made. **(Recommendation 2)**.

## 2.2 Relationship management

Current and past grantholders were asked to rate their agreement with statements about Youth Music's relationship management on a seven-point Likert scale. When presented with the statement 'I feel comfortable approaching Youth Music staff with a problem', 91% (n=118) agreed or strongly agreed. Similarly, 83% (n=108) agreed/strongly agreed that 'Youth Music are flexible with the requirements' of their grant, and 88% (n=114) agreed/strongly agreed that 'Youth Music staff respond to queries efficiently'. In addition to these ratings, we received a number of positive comments regarding the flexibility and approachability of Youth Music staff:

*I have found Youth Music staff to be responsive, helpful and prompt in reply to questions about our grant.*

*Very good to have a strong relationship with the grant manager: it really helps with planning and when activities have to shift slightly to meet outcomes.*

We also received comments with constructive feedback:

*...it would feel better as a grantholder to be asked at the application stage to demonstrate our experience and past success (as well as a reasonably detailed outline of our plans for the funding) and to then be trusted to make sensible decisions on the finer details, reporting back major changes only.*

A common response to questions regarding Youth Music's grants and relationship management referred to changes in staff in our Grants & Learning team. Since January 2016 there has been some staff turnover with four new Grants & Learning Officers joining the team, and some regions of the portfolio being reallocated to different staff members. This caused frustration to some respondents:

*There is a friendliness to Youth Music staff in general that makes it relatively easy to discuss a concern or query. However, there is often change, meaning you can have discussed a topic with one contact, only to have to revisit the same area with a different contact*

There were also several comments from grantholders who hoped for more face-to-face contact with Youth Music staff members:

*The new relationship manager - whilst there has been email contact - has never spoken to me, nor visited anything over the last 2 years.*

Efforts are made to visit projects across the country, both by Grants & Learning Officers and the wider staff team. In 2016/17, members of Youth Music staff and the board of trustees made over 120 visits to funded organisations. The emphasis on contact time further supports the demand for grantholder gatherings, which present an opportunity for all grantholders to meet with their assigned officer in their region (**Recommendation 3**).

## 2.3 Improvements on grant-making processes

We asked respondents 'what is the one thing we could do to improve our grant-making processes?' – 59 respondents provided an answer, a response rate of 34%. These qualitative answers were coded into five broad categories:

- **More support for application and grant requirements**

*Workshop on writing a blog and uploading.*

*Talk with the applicant more about how they can improve the application before submission.*

*To get really detailed evaluation is extremely time consuming, more funding for this.*

- **Communications, including transparency and more face-to-face contact**

*Create possibility of occasional site visits OR increase opportunities for networking.*

*A more open approach and more transparency about what funds really are available would be helpful.*

- **Technology**

*The forms are sometimes unclear and tricky to navigate. Perhaps having a look at the layout - particularly when reporting on objectives.*

*Make the budget form simpler and less time-consuming to complete ... [the new grants database] is easier to make mistakes than with previous system.*

- **Application turnaround time**

*Possibly have more regularity in when to apply - not necessarily more often but it's difficult to work project lengths to the schedule without knowing more in advance (**Recommendation 4**).*

*A challenge for us is that whilst waiting to hear we don't want to apply for other big projects that might overwhelm us if we get all of them. But if we had been unsuccessful it would have left our company exposed to a short fall.*

- **Building in continuation funding for successful projects:**

*As an organisation delivering Youth Music programmes for a number of years it can be stressful having to reapply for funding at the end of each grant. In an ideal world there would be some formal recognition of successful projects and provision made for them to receive sustained funding (**Recommendation 5**).*

The remaining six responses which did not fit into the above themes were respondents saying that they wouldn't change anything, or that the question did not apply to them:

*I feel the current way you are working is exactly right. You have a good balance of information needed and requested as well as a good monitoring system to show impact of projects.*

## 2.4 Grantholder resources

Youth Music uses the evaluation data submitted by grantholders to produce a range of publications and resources. When asked to rate their agreement with the statement 'I have read some or all of Youth Music's Impact Report 2014-15', 81% (n=104) agreed or strongly agreed, and 88% (n=113) agreed or strongly agreed that they had made use of Youth Music's Quality Framework 'Do, Review, Improve'.

Eighty-seven percent (n=112) of respondents to the statement 'I am aware that Youth Music produces publications based on evidence from project evaluation reports' agreed or strongly agreed, and a further 105 respondents (81%) agreed or strongly agreed that these evidence-based resources had informed their work.

We also asked respondents what resources they think Youth Music should produce that would be useful to them. Fifty-two people chose to leave a comment, and these comments were coded into themes representing a variety of different requests:

- **Evaluation resources**

*A form of online data entry system to standardise factors such as personal details and attendance in a guaranteed way would be good. UK [Y]outh are trying such a system at the moment called The Knowledge Platform.*

*More extensive guide to monitoring and evaluation processes.*

- **Examples of other grantholders' good practice**

*A troubleshooting guide on how to tackle issues for projects based on experiences from other projects would be excellent. I know we have fed back information on how we have dealt with problems during our projects that may be helpful to others, and I'm sure other projects have helpful experience to offer us.*

- **Evidence reviews from previously funded projects**

*Meta analyses of types of project; e.g. collating findings and outcomes from all projects with [looked after children], or [early years], etc.*

*Resources based on news and findings from work in our geographical area is useful.*

- **Signposting to literature and contextual information from other sources**

*Links to government/ACE/other national reports and statistics around things like levels of engagement in music/the arts and links between cultural engagement and wellbeing/educational attainment/re-offending rates etc.*

- **Networking, practice-sharing and signposting resources**

*Online directory of all music projects and Youth Organisations across London.*

*A database of music practitioners, Youth Music funded partners and referral routes for young musicians in my area.*

Some of the resource suggestions listed above are already available on the Youth Music Network, suggesting that more could be done to signpost to existing resources in addition to producing new work (**Recommendation 6**).

### 3. Youth Music's impact

Using a seven-point Likert scale, we asked respondents to rate Youth Music's success in supporting grantholder organisations in a number of aspects. The 129 respondents who answered this question rated 'Improving the quality of your work' as the most successful aspect, with 71% (n=90) rating the level of support given by Youth Music as above average.

Respondents were asked to select the aspect for which they would most like further support from Youth Music (figure 6). Fifty-one percent (n=62) of respondents requested more support in enhancing their organisational stability, followed by requests for facilitated collaboration (**recommendation 3**) and help to measure impact.

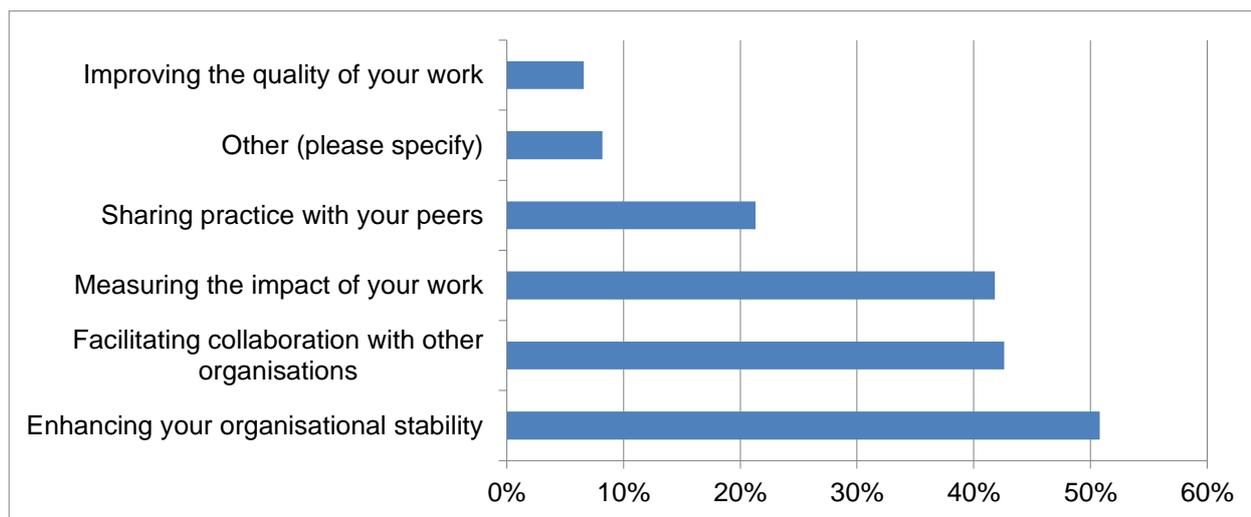


Figure 6. Aspects where grantholders would like further support from Youth Music.

Respondents were given an option to provide additional comments if the aspect they wished for further support in was not on the list. Some of these options did broadly fit into the categories specified, for example: "*Working together to work for strategic joined up change in sector*" broadly aligns with the 'facilitating collaboration' option above. Others focused on the aforementioned calls for continuation funding as opposed to reapplying every time, or more training and networking opportunities for music leaders. These responses show further demand for Youth Music to aspire to support longer-term organisational stability through our funding streams (**Recommendation 5**), but also to continue connecting practitioners across the non-formal music education sector.

Again using a seven-point Likert scale, we asked respondents how they would rate Youth Music's overall impact on their organisation. 129 people responded to this question, and the rating average was 5.89 out of 7. Eighty-eight percent (n=113) of respondents rated Youth Music's impact on their organisation as above average. On the same scale, we then asked respondents to rate Youth Music's overall impact on their wider field of work. Seventy-four percent (n=96) of respondents rated Youth Music's impact on their wider field of work as above average.

Additionally, we asked respondents how well they thought Youth Music understands the field in which they work. Out of 130 who answered the question, 76% (n=99) rated Youth Music's understanding of the field in which they work as above average, with 20% (n=26) selecting the highest rating, labelled 'regarded as an expert in the field'.

## 4. The Youth Music Network

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with statements about the Youth Music Network, on a four-point Likert scale. Of 154 respondents to this question, 88% (n=135) agreed or strongly agreed that the Youth Music Network is a useful resource, even for those who are not applying for funding. Eighty-seven percent (n=134) agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the Youth Music Network to other music education professionals. Eighty-two percent (n=127) agreed or strongly agreed that the Youth Music Network newsletter is useful and relevant to their work.

When asked to select how they use the Youth Music Network, 80% (n=111) of respondents told us that they use it to download resources such as the Quality Framework. Sixty-two percent (n=85) also told us that they use the Youth Music Network to read blogs (50% to write blogs, and 17% to comment on blogs). 'Downloading research reports' and 'searching for Youth Music funded projects' both yielded results of 60%. Less common uses of the Youth Music Network included searching for jobs (13%, n=18), advertising job vacancies (18%, n=25) and participating in discussion groups (23%, n=32).

Twenty-five respondents chose to leave comments in this section about the Youth Music Network, although over a third of these were actually general comments about Youth Music **(Recommendation 7)** so are reported on later in this document. The remaining comments tended to focus on the user interface (n=6), troubles with finding time to use the site (n=4) or difficulty getting their music leaders to engage in the site (n=4). Examples of these comments are presented below:

*Still difficult to find things. Our organisation profile seems to have vanished. Music Leaders will not engage with it or use the resources available, no matter what we do to encourage them*

*To be honest I barely have any time to look at the Youth Music Network or any of the other different websites that exist. It's just hard to have the time in a small charity to put information on anyone else's site when you have to also maintain your own websites.*

*I do get the feeling a lot of people posting are doing so because they are obliged to under their grant requirements. It all feels a bit perfunctory, in truth.*

## 5. Consultation questions

While the Stakeholder Survey is a chance for applicants and grantholders to give their opinions on a number of Youth Music's processes and ways of working, it is also useful for gauging stakeholders' opinions and experiences of a number of other matters of interest either internal or external to Youth Music. These opinions may form recommendations for Youth Music, or may be used to inform additional studies or reports. This year we consulted grantholders about the following two areas:

### 5.1 Grant adjustment policy

As part of our grant-making policy, Youth Music reserves the right to invite applicants to apply for an amount that is higher or lower than their original request. In 2015/16 this affected 31 out of 46 organisations applying for Fund B grant awards, who were asked, on average, to make a reduction of 25% of their original request amount after stage one of the application process. Reducing request amounts in this way enabled Youth Music to make more Fund B grant awards.

We asked all respondents to the Stakeholder Survey to give us their opinion on this policy, and we asked those affected by the policy some more detailed questions about the impact on their organisations.

When asked whether they agreed that "Youth Music should decrease grant request amounts where necessary (so that it can make more Fund B grant awards)" or that "Youth Music should not decrease grant request amounts (and I understand that this will result in fewer Fund B grants overall)", 152 of the survey's respondents answered. Seventy-eight percent (n=118) of these respondents opted for the first statement.

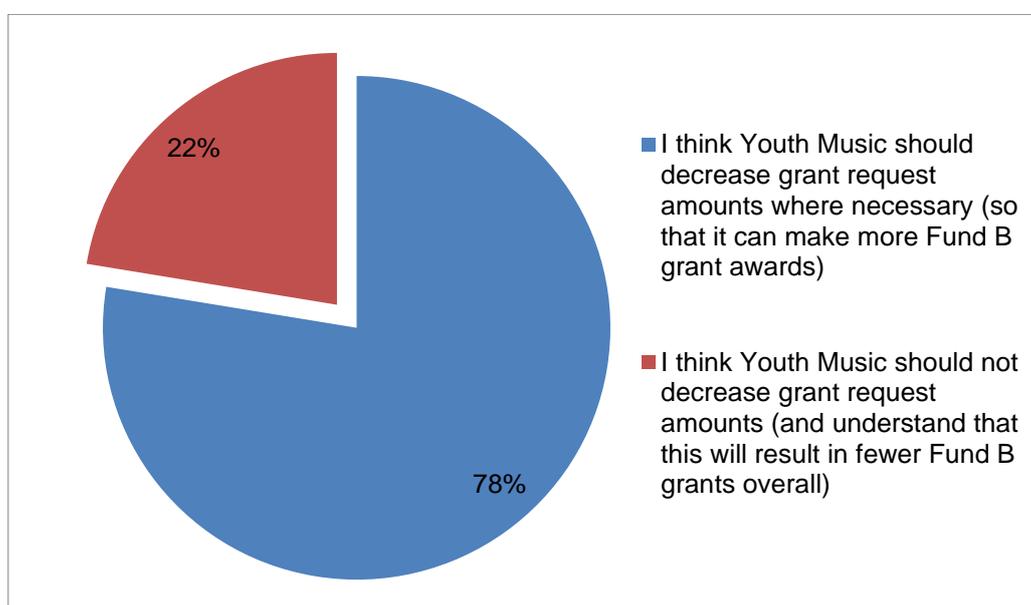


Figure 7. Respondents' views on Youth Music's grant adjustment policy

We asked respondents to provide further comments or explanations of why they had chosen their answer, and 44 (29%) chose to elaborate. The range of comments reflected the results above:

*Tough call! Although this impacted heavily on our organisation at the end of the day we were awarded a grant which meant we could continue our good work together. In this economic climate we have a responsibility to find ways to be more robust and develop enterprising ways to become less reliant on Youth Music.*

*I think it depends whether a project is viable with a decrease or not - if it is a combination of different aspects then hopefully would be. Presumably Youth Music does not need to request this of all projects, if there are ones where this clearly isn't possible...*

We asked the Fund B grantees what effect this process had had on their overall programme, and responses were given both on a seven-point Likert scale (from extremely negative to extremely positive) and through additional comments. The most common rating was 'neutral' (n=8, 40%) or slightly below neutral (n=6, 30%). Five respondents (25%) rated the impact as slightly positive (above the midway 'neutral' point), and one respondent (5%) chose 'extremely negative'. Comments included:

*It has taken staff time which would have been outsourced to a project manager as we were unwilling to reduce the substance of the project.*

*It allowed us to look at raising sustainable match and in kind funding and resulted in helping us to focus more on our sustainability.*

Youth Music reserves the right to continue to offer grants of a reduced amount, but intends to monitor the impact of this across the duration of the grants. Funding limits and demand for funds are reviewed on a regular basis, and where possible criteria are adjusted in line with the changing external environment (**Recommendation 8**).

## 5.2 Shared impact measurement

Youth Music is currently exploring the possibility of undertaking a more shared approach towards measuring the impact of the work we invest in. As part of our research we compiled a list of shared measurement frameworks and asked respondents to tell us which methods they had heard of, used in the past, use regularly, or not heard of at all. 148 respondents answered all or part of this question.

The most commonly used measurement frameworks were those designed and circulated by Youth Music in the Youth Music Evaluation Builder: The Youth Music Musical Development Scale (44% of respondents using regularly or have used in the past), and the Youth Music Wellbeing Scale (42%) were the most commonly used by respondents. However, the remaining respondents (56% and 58% respectively) selected that they were aware of the frameworks but do not use them, or that they weren't aware of them at all, illustrating that even the most commonly used measurement frameworks in the list are being used by less than half of the survey's respondents.

Beyond the frameworks provided by Youth Music, there is a significant drop in other shared measurement methods being used by survey respondents. However, these tended to be more specialist scales focused on specific target groups, for example: the Sounds of Intent Framework (17% using regularly or have used in the past) which is used in SEN/D settings, or the Early Years Foundation Stage (16% using regularly or have used in the past).

Respondents were given the chance to specify any other frameworks that they use regularly, and eight respondents told us that they are using their own measures and scales – some of which had been influenced by measurements listed in the question. Other responses included "Outcomes Star", organisational theories of change, and broader comments about their evaluation habits ("we use a triangulation approach to measure outcomes"). Table 1 (below) sets out the results of this question in full.

Answer Options	Not aware of	Aware of but do not use	Have used in the past	Use regularly	Response Count
Youth Music Wellbeing Scale	45 (30%)	42 (28%)	29 (20%)	32 (22%)	148
Youth Music Musical Development Scale	37 (25%)	46 (31%)	38 (26%)	27 (18%)	148
Youth Music Young Musicians Development Scale	44 (30%)	54 (37%)	26 (18%)	21 (15%)	145
Youth Music Music Practitioner Scale	53 (37%)	36 (25%)	34 (24%)	20 (14%)	143
Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale	91 (64%)	27 (19%)	8 (6%)	15 (11%)	141
Sounds of Intent Framework	72 (51%)	46 (32%)	13 (9%)	12 (8%)	143
Early Years Foundation Stage	56 (40%)	62 (44%)	10 (7%)	12 (9%)	140
Youth Music Early Years Musical Assessment Scales	55 (38%)	68 (47%)	15 (11%)	6 (4%)	144
Sounds of Intent in the Early Years Framework	78 (56%)	51 (36%)	6 (4%)	6 (4%)	141
Public Health England Arts for Health and Wellbeing Framework	71(50%)	48 (34%)	17 (12%)	6 (4%)	142
Youth Music Agency and Citizenship Scale	82 (58%)	35 (25%)	18 (13%)	6 (4%)	141
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	105 (75%)	22 (16%)	9 (6%)	4 (3%)	140
Leuven Wellbeing and Involvement Scale	109 (78%)	22 (16%)	5 (3%)	4 (3%)	140
The Boxall Profile	113 (82%)	17 (12%)	5 (4%)	3 (2%)	138
NPC Wellbeing Measure	101(72%)	33 (23%)	5 (4%)	2(1%)	141
Inspiring Impact Measuring Up! tool	105 (74%)	29 (21%)	5 (4%)	2 (1%)	141
Schwarzer & Jerusalem General Self-Efficacy Scale	114 (81%)	24 (17%)	2 (1%)	1 (1%)	141
NPC Journey to Employment Framework	111(80%)	26 (19%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	138
Marsh & Richards Life Effectiveness Questionnaire	119 (83%)	21 (15%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	143
SRCD Children's Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction Scale	121 (87%)	18 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	139
Other (please specify)	21				

Table 1. Shared impact measurement methods used by respondents

These results show that the majority of respondents to the survey are currently limited to Youth Music's own measurement scales. This suggests that any move to shared measures needs to be gradual and smooth, accommodating of grantholders' existing knowledge, and appropriate to the groups of people they are working with. **(Recommendation 9)**.

## 6. Final ratings and comments

In the final section of the survey, we asked respondents how they would rate Youth Music overall as a funder, on a seven-point Likert scale. The rating average for this question was 5.95 out of 7. Eighty-six percent of 152 respondents (n=130) rated Youth Music above average, with 47% (n=72) selecting the highest point of the scale (labelled 'very good'). Six percent (n=9) of respondents rated Youth Music as below average (2%, n=3 choosing the bottom point of the scale, labelled 'very poor'), and the remaining 8% (n=13) rated Youth Music as 'average'.

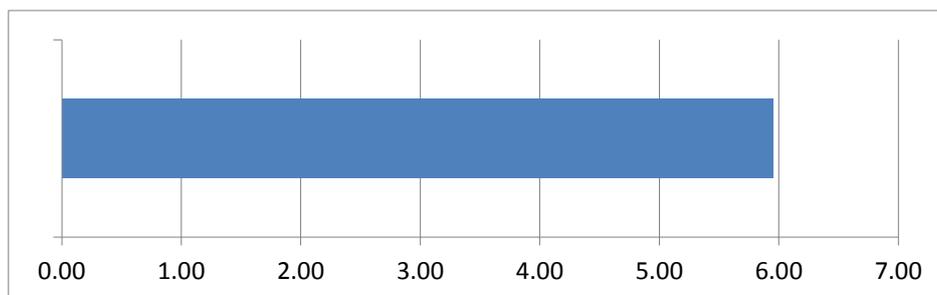


Figure 8. Rating average of Youth Music as a funder overall (5.95/7).

We also asked respondents to tell us the one word they would use to describe Youth Music. 127 respondents gave an answer. By far the highest response was 'supportive' (n = 13), followed by 'vital' (n = 5), 'innovative' (n = 5), 'thorough' (n = 4), 'flexible' (n = 3) and 'committed' (n = 3).

Finally, 50 respondents took up the opportunity to leave additional comments, categorised into four main themes.

- **Comments about Youth Music's commitment to children in challenging circumstances**

*Youth Music provides an invaluable service in funding arts organisations to deliver inspiring music projects with children and young people most of whom would not otherwise have the opportunity to engage in music in this way. Its focus on children in challenging circumstances is crucial, and enables the door to music to be opened for thousands of children across the country.*

*Youth Music is driven by clear values and beliefs, and has an understanding of the context in which their grant holders operate.*

- **Comments about Youth Music's funding decisions**

*I think Youth Music is getting better, but needs to consider how investing strategically in key organisations could produce more than the sum of the parts if done properly. We have recently a number of occasions been turned down for funding and feedback was poor. Youth Music is the only real funder for early years provision so please keep doing that too.*

*Feedback to our last application was very positive, giving the impression that it was fundable as submitted and you just did not have sufficient money to fund our project. That is understandable, if frustrating. We will keep trying.*

- **Comments about Youth Music's impact on organisations' ways of working**

*Youth Music funding has had a major impact on the development of our activities over the past 6 years. It has encouraged us to be much more rigorous about our monitoring and evaluation, and enabled us to raise the quality and ambition of our work in SEND settings. Thank you!*

*Feel increasingly able to reflect on the frustrations and failures we encounter (as well as the good bits) and this helps us and others to learn from mistakes which is particularly useful. Feel more help may be needed around sustainability and what really counts as sustainable practice.*

- **Comments about how Youth Music's investment has impacted organisations and young participants**

*Funding from Youth Music has allowed us to work with looked after children for the past four years. We are now on our fifth year. In that time we have enhanced [children and young people's] lives and developed a workforce, in a county faced with the challenge of geography and very limited resources. The funding from Youth Music has changed lives and we hope we can continue this much needed work.*

*I have been a music leader working on Y[outh] M[usic] funded projects since the 1990s. Every time I run a workshop (most weeks) I am reminded what a difference funding can make to young peoples' lives. Without Youth Music this would not be possible.*

*I have seen the value of Youth Music investment in the lives of countless young people and professionals over many years. I have benefited greatly as a music practitioner, project manager and general professional from the investment of Youth Music in my career. I have also seen how Youth Music has responded to trends over the years to tailor its offer toward the needs of young people in challenging circumstances. In a time of ongoing austerity and instability, that has torn at the fabric of community life and services, Youth Music fills a cavernous void.*

## 7. Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** Youth Music should monitor and review Fund A reporting over the coming year to understand how best to support Fund A grantees in their evaluation, in addition to providing examples of submitted reports.

**Recommendation 2:** A new, comprehensive evaluation guidance document is due for publication in 2017. This should be accessible, and publicised widely to grant applicants and grantees.

**Recommendation 3:** Youth Music should hold grantee gatherings on an annual basis.

**Recommendation 4:** Youth Music should provide more advance warning on application deadlines (at least nine months for Fund B and six months for Fund A).

**Recommendation 5:** Youth Music should consider ways in which it can support organisational sustainability, including the development of a continuation funding policy.

**Recommendation 6:** Future redevelopment of the Youth Music Network should consider user journey and thematic content curation.

**Recommendation 7:** Youth Music should re-word questions about the Youth Music Network in future iterations of the Stakeholder Survey to avoid misunderstanding about what respondents are being asked to comment on.

**Recommendation 8:** Youth Music should continue to monitor the reduced funding awards policy for Fund B applicants, make the policy more explicit in the applicant guidance notes, and consider refining the large grants criteria (which applies to applications of £100,000 or more).

**Recommendation 9:** Youth Music should pilot the use of shared measures with a select few grantees prior to any roll-out to the wider portfolio.