



Youth Music
Stakeholder Survey 2019 Findings

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Executive Summary

Youth Music carries out an annual stakeholder survey to inform our grant-making processes and strategy. In the Summer of 2019, we gathered anonymous feedback (via an online survey) from current Youth Music grantees, as well as all those who applied for Youth Music funding during the 2018/19 financial year. Analysis of these responses helps Youth Music to shape and adapt our work in response to present needs, and provides a consistent baseline against which to analyse changes to stakeholder satisfaction over time

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

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their experiences of applying for funding from Youth Music. We found that two thirds of respondents deemed the level of detail on the application form to be appropriate for the amount of money requested.

The quality of support received from Youth Music during the application process was rated as above average by over two thirds of survey respondents in multiple areas, the most successful being phone and email support offered by Youth Music staff. Two thirds of unsuccessful applicants also reported being satisfied with the feedback received on their applications.

2. Youth Music's grant management

Responses from past or current grantees showed that a significant majority of grantees feel the level of their grant requirements are about right. Three quarters of this year's survey respondents also reported feeling well supported in their evaluation process by Youth Music staff and resources. Responses relating to Youth Music staff and relationship management were overwhelmingly positive, with a significant majority reporting feeling comfortable approaching staff with a problem, agreeing that Youth Music staff respond to their queries efficiently, and perceiving Youth Music staff members to be flexible with their grant requirements when needed.

Suggestions of improvements to Youth Music's grantmaking processes included requests for more ways of connecting with other projects, as well as more evidence-based reports on topics relevant to the sector, as well as existing and new Youth Music resources in different formats such as videos, infographics or examples of good practice.

Responses to several questions in this section revealed a need to pay particular attention to the accessibility and simplicity of Youth Music's evaluation and reporting requirements. Several recommendations have been made to consider how Youth Music can best support grantees in their impact measurement going forward.

3. Youth Music's impact

Respondents reported feeling particularly well-supported by Youth Music in measuring the impact of their work and improving the quality of their work. Consistent with previous years, stakeholders reported needing more support in enhancing organisational sustainability and facilitating collaboration with other organisations. Despite rating Youth

Music as successful in supporting them to measure the impact of their work, almost half of respondents selected this as an area where support could improve.

The majority of respondents rated Youth Music's impact on their organisation as above average, as well as on their wider fields of work.

4. Music Education Hubs (MEHs)

Just under two thirds of respondents reported being somehow affiliated with their local MEH, with the majority of respondents reporting being related to 4 or fewer local hubs. There was a small improvement in respondents' perceptions of MEHs and their capacity to cater for the needs of children in challenging circumstances, and a range of responses suggesting how MEHs could do this better was explored.

5. The Youth Music Network

Commonly reported uses of the Youth Music Network included downloading resources such as the Quality Framework, reading blogs authored by Youth Music staff and grantholders, and downloading research reports. The majority of respondents reported feeling that the Youth Music Network was a valuable tool, but there were also some constructive comments about how it could be used more effectively by grantholders. This is consistent with last year's survey results.

6. Closing comments

As a funder overall, Youth Music received an average rating of 6.13 out of 7, with 88% rating Youth Music as above average, and over half selecting the highest point of the Likert scale. Common words used to describe Youth Music included 'supportive' (consistent with the most common word in last year's survey), followed by 'inclusive', 'essential', 'effective' and 'open'.

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 2019 Stakeholder Survey. It is structured broadly in the same order as the survey itself.

Method and respondent information

An online survey consisting of a mixture of 42 questions (both open and closed) was distributed to 426 organisations, comprising all current grantholders as well as applicants who had been declined in the last financial year. 116 respondents completed the survey – a response rate of 27% (a slight decrease from the 32% response rate of the 2018 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 who applied for funding in the 2018-19 financial year, with slight under-representation of London and East Midlands based grants and slight over-representation of North East based grants.

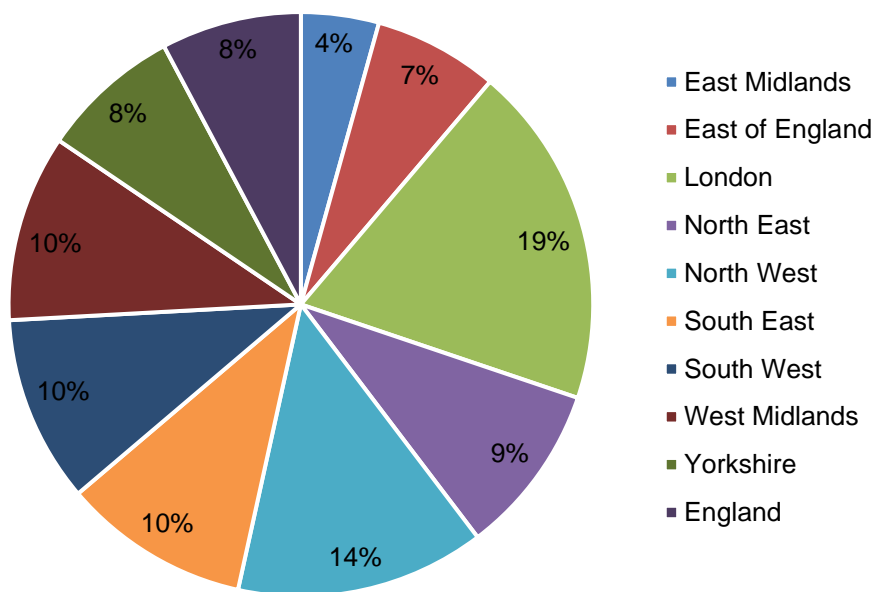


Figure 1. Respondents’ usual area of operation

Figure 2 shows the range of turnover of organisations that completed the survey, demonstrating a wide range of organisation sizes amongst respondents. Just over half of total respondents have an annual turnover of less than £500,000, with just under one third with a turnover of £1million or more.

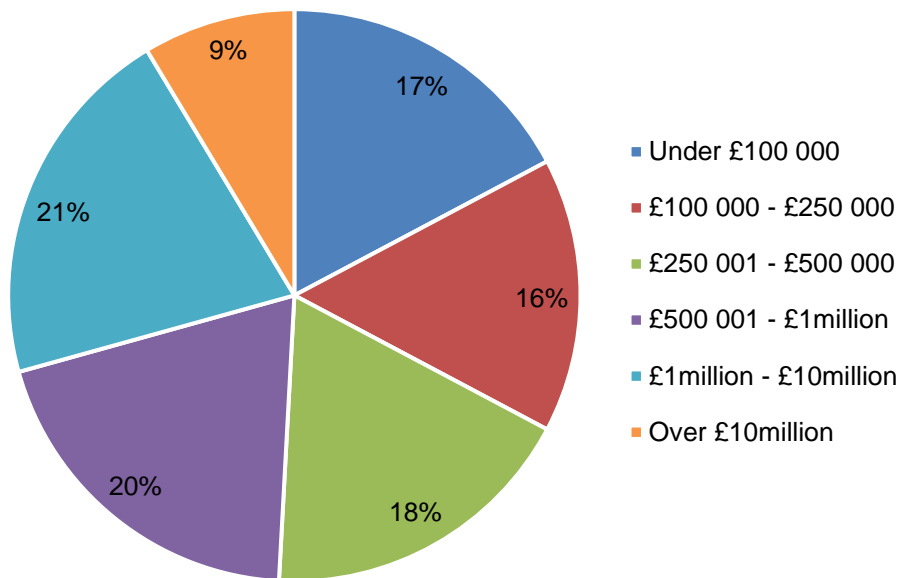


Figure 2. Respondents by organisation turnover

Figure 3 shows that a significant proportion of respondents were from not-for-profit organisations, with 57% of respondents representing registered charities, 9% from voluntary or community organisations, and 9% from community interest companies. A further 9% of respondents were from companies limited by guarantee, and local authorities and music services made up 11% of respondents. The remaining 6% of responses came from schools, academies, companies limited by shares, and universities, with no representation from nurseries, primary care trusts, prisons/YOIs or PRUs.

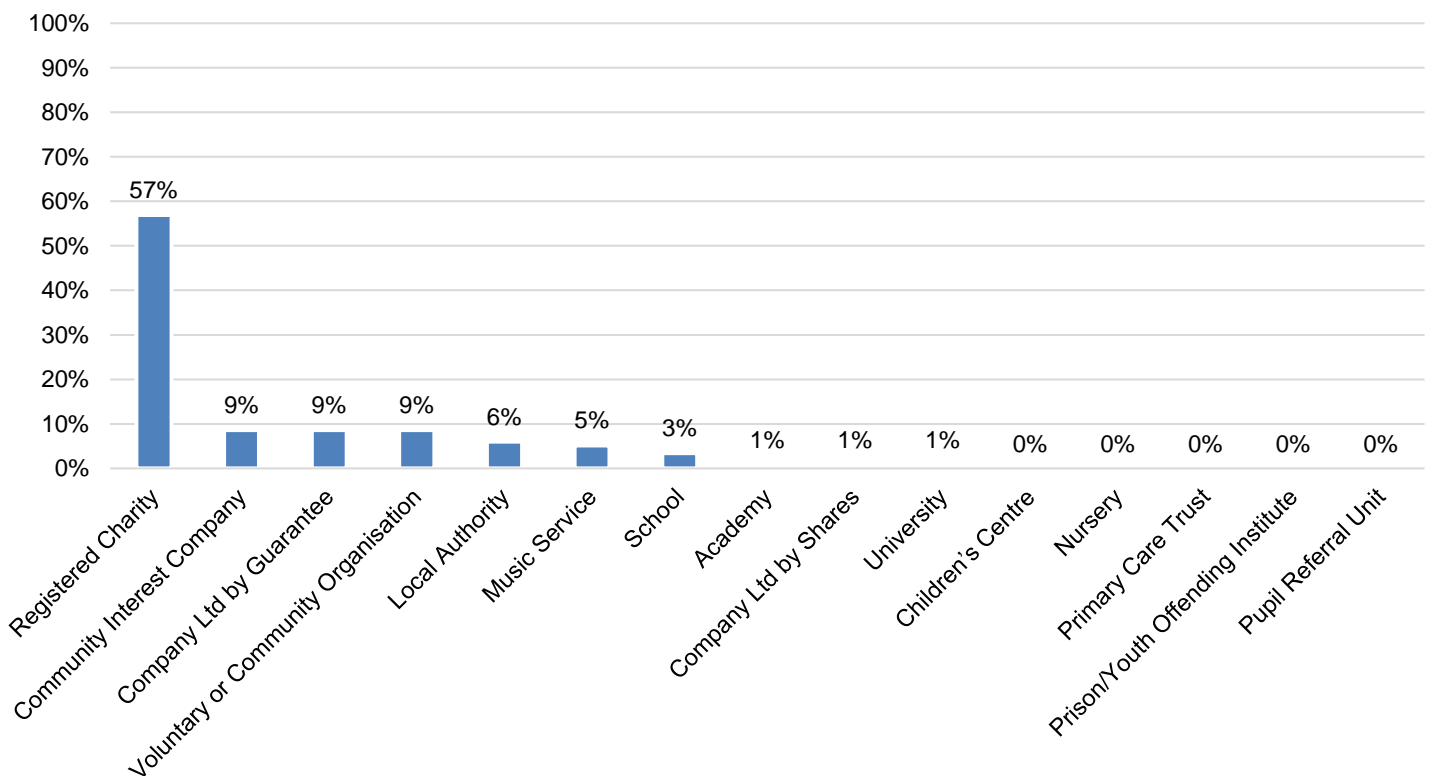


Figure 3. Respondents by organisation type

Results

The remainder of this report will present the survey findings, along with some recommendations for how Youth Music can respond to these.

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). The majority of respondents (69%) felt the level of detail was 'about right'. This is lower than last year's survey result (76%). Of the 31% (n=28) who told us that the level of detail was 'too much', just over two thirds (68%, n=19) were current Fund A grantholders. This is consistent with the same cross-analysis on last year's survey responses. It is also an issue known to Youth Music staff through anecdotal discussions with grantholders and applicants (**Recommendation 1**).

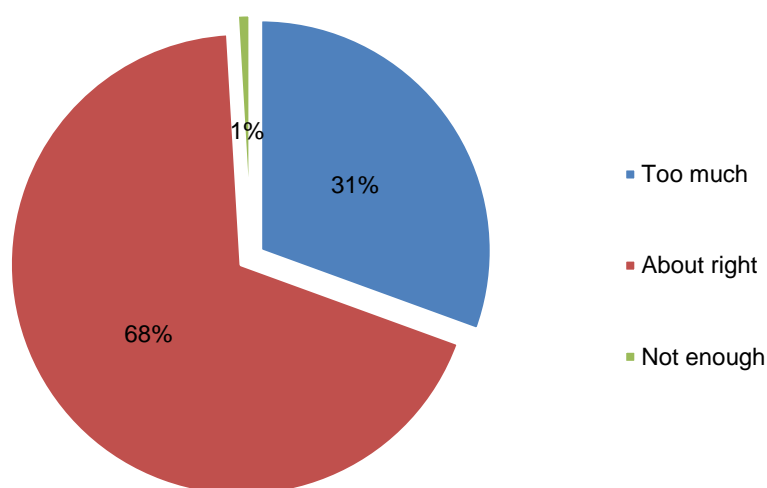


Figure 4: "What do you think about the level of detail on the application form in relation to the size of grant?"

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of application support that they received on a Likert scale from 1 to 7 (1 = very poor, 4 = average and 7 = excellent). This question was amended in this year's survey in order to find out more about stakeholders' experiences of the different types of support we offer. All four areas of support offered by Youth Music were rated as above average by the majority of respondents: 78% rated phone or email support from Youth Music staff as above average, 76% rated Youth Music's project planning resources provided online as above average, 71% rated the accessibility of application questions and language as above average, and 67% rated the quality of the online application portal as above average.

An additional 33 respondents chose to leave comments about the support they received during the application stage, many of which were broadly positive:

Really appreciate the outcomes document from Youth Music - this has also informed other funding bids that we have submitted (and been successful with!)

Particularly amazed at the phone support

Alongside these, there were several more critical comments left about certain elements of the application process. In particular, the language around the planning/evaluation areas of the application form came up in several responses, with some commenting that the terminology was “very specific” or hard to grasp:

The application process is very "technical" ie you need to thoroughly understand the aims/outcomes/indicators. Once you understand this, and how it applies to your project it's straightforward, but I can imagine that for some, it is difficult or a barrier to accessing funds.

Trying to understand the exact terminology and content you are required regarding targets can be a little confusing.

Several other responses to this question contained comments about the online portal being “tricky”:

The online portal is not particularly user friendly/intuitive

I found the grants portal tricky to begin with but am now familiar with it and it all works well.

Youth Music is in regular dialogue with the database provider and are working to improve the user experience in response to the issues raised.

There were also frequent requests for updated resources such as a Word document template of the application form, for those who wish to work on their applications offline. This is something which Youth Music provides, however, several comments noted that the word counts in the online and offline forms differ, and noted that this could be updated:

Word count does not always match word count in Word document - which is difficult for editing purposes. (Recommendation 2).

Youth Music provides feedback on all applications received, aiming to highlight strengths and areas for development. Of 33 respondents who had previously been unsuccessful in an application to Youth Music, 67% agreed or strongly agreed that this feedback had been useful (similar to last year’s 63%), whilst 15% were neutral, and 18% disagreed or strongly disagreed (in line with last year’s 19%). The results here suggest that the quality of feedback on unsuccessful grants, and/or the increased opportunity to discuss this feedback following notification has remained similar to last year.

An accessibility review of Youth Music’s application and reporting processes is currently ongoing. As part of this, some additional questions about the application process were included in this year’s survey. These questions were open to both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

Fifty one respondents left comments on what additional support they would have found useful during the application process. Answers were broadly coded into the following themes:

Face-to-face meetings or workshops with Youth Music staff prior to application deadline:

[name of other funder] take the time to meet their prospective funded organisations. Not possible for YM who are London-based however a face to face meeting after application did help us to clear up any queries and enabled us to talk passionately about our project proposal.

Increased or better advertised telephone/email support:

I felt pretty shy about ringing the staff - I wasn't sure how to ask for the help I needed, and felt I didn't want to bother them

More information on what's currently in Youth Music's portfolio:

Information on other Youth Music grantholders in my area and the projects they are running, to ensure we don't waste time or duplicate. (Recommendation 3)

Specific resources:

Videos on good/creative evaluation collection methods - maybe some case studies of what other organisations do

Examples of successful applications available online

Not applicable/got all the support needed:

The process was very well supported already.

Nothing specifically as I was able to ask questions throughout.

Another new question about the most difficult aspect(s) of the application process was added to this year's survey, and 76 respondents left answers, which were broadly coded into the following themes:

Understanding Youth Music's requirements about evaluation:

Re-framing the outcomes, indicators and evidence to satisfy YM - not because we do not understand what these are or how to express them but because YM want very specific words which do not necessarily suit.

Writing outcomes in Youth Music Speak

It should be noted here that there were several comments around re-wording outcomes, from both successful and unsuccessful applicants, suggesting that Youth Music has further work to do in supporting both successful and unsuccessful applicants with refining their evaluation plans. This process and respondents' experiences of it is addressed at several points in this survey, and will be explored further in consultation with grantholders and respondents to next year's survey with further questions **(Recommendation 4)**.

Using the application portal:

Navigating the on-line system.

Level of detail required vs. restrictive word limits:

Having to fill in so much detail but within a very restrictive word count.

Showing how we would embed the Youth Music framework, within the wordcount.

Timing of funding rounds:

Stage 2 took the most time to pull together and it happened to coincide with the summer holiday, which made it even trickier to get everything together.

Specific areas/questions of application:

Probably the Activity Plan, given it's such a complex document to put together with a good deal of detail needed.

The budget section is unnecessarily complicated. Very few other funders ask charities to itemise specific budget lines that they want that particular funder to cover, so the fact that Youth Music does makes it very complicated to input in the application process, as well as report against.

2. Youth Music's grant management

Eighty-four percent (n=91) of the survey respondents indicated that they were a current grantholder. Of those who indicated that they were not (n=17), a further 9 respondents indicated that they'd previously held a Youth Music grant which had since been closed.

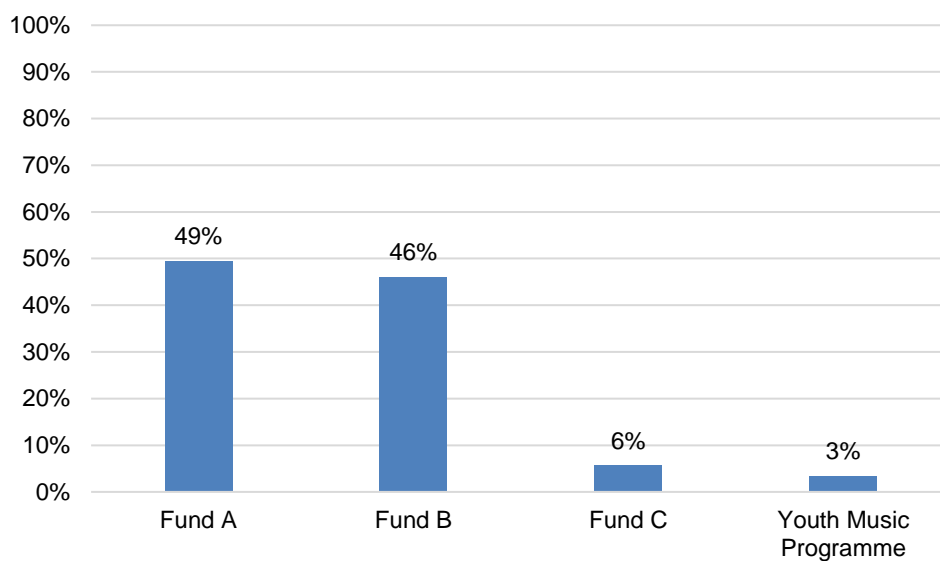


Figure 5: Grants currently held by respondents (n=89)

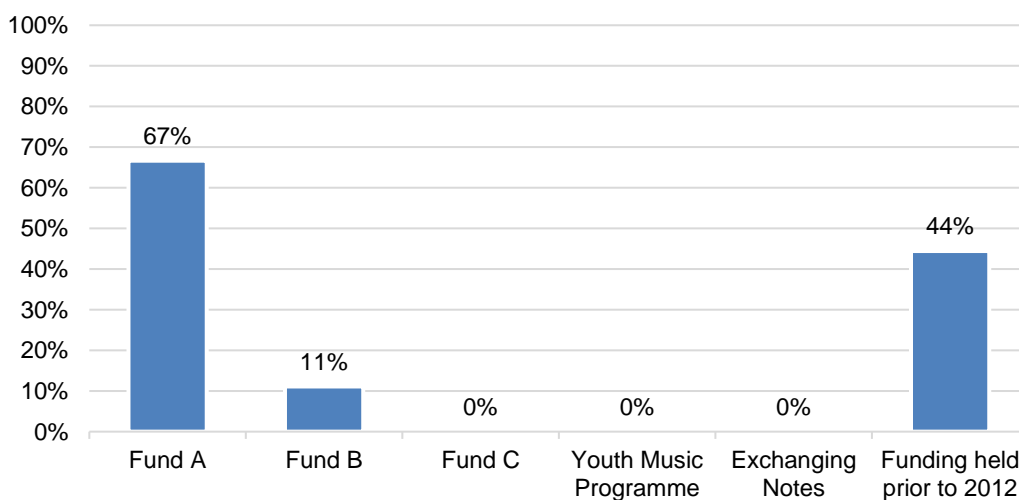


Figure 6: Grants previously held by respondents (n=9)

All grantholders (past or present, n=100) were asked a series of questions about their experiences of being a Youth Music grantholder.

2.1 Grant requirements and Youth Music resources

Of these respondents, 82% said the proportion of reporting and monitoring requirements relating to the size of their grant was about right, with 17% saying they were 'too much' and the remaining 1% feeling they were 'not enough'. This is broadly consistent with last year's survey, however, **Recommendation 1** describes the review process of application and reporting requirements that Youth Music is currently undergoing, which may affect responses to this question in future editions of the survey.

Seventy six percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had felt well supported in their evaluation by Youth Music staff and resources. This is consistent with last year's result of 75%, which was somewhat lower than the 2017 survey response to this question (83%). In response to this, a recommendation was made last year to explore the potential reasons for this drop in respondents feeling supported in their evaluation processes. Whilst Youth Music has done some work towards exploring these potential reasons, a more active approach towards improving this experience needs to be taken in future (**Recommendation 4**). Eighty one percent agreed or strongly agreed that the process of evaluation was useful for strengthening their organisation, which is a 10% drop from last year's result, however 78% felt their evaluation skills had improved as a result of reporting to Youth Music: a 5% increase from last year's response. This result, paired with some of the responses to qualitative questions in this year's survey regarding evaluation, suggests that although the process of refining evaluation plans may be time-consuming and frustrating, some grantholders are seeing the benefits of this process and feeling more confident in their evaluation abilities. At Youth Music, as our own knowledge and standards around evaluation also improve, we are noticing an overall increase in quality of the outcomes submitted. Whilst this level of rigour and accuracy appears to cause frustrations for some grantholders, we believe this overall increase in quality of evaluation plans to be a positive change which we will continue to support, although attention will be paid to the frustrations voiced in this survey, and we will consider how else we can make this process more manageable.

A new question about the accessibility of reporting to Youth Music revealed that 76% agreed or strongly agreed that reporting to Youth Music is accessible to them and their organisation. Of the 11 respondents who rated the accessibility of reporting to Youth Music as below average, nine were from organisations with a turnover of £1m a year or less, and seven rated the proportion of monitoring requirements as 'too much' in relation to the size of their grant (**See Recommendation 1**). Four of these respondents were current Fund B grantholders, whilst the others had previously held Fund A grants or pre-2012 grants. Whilst this is a relatively small number of responses, this analysis suggests that there may be a connection between the size of an organisation and its capacity to complete the requirements associated with a grant.

Youth Music uses the evaluation data submitted by grantholders to produce a range of publications and resources. Ninety six percent agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of this fact, and 84% agreed or strongly agreed that these publications had informed their work. Eighty eight percent agreed or strongly agreed that they had made use of Youth Music's Quality Framework, and 80% agreed or strongly agreed that they had read some or all of Youth Music's latest Impact Report. This is all broadly consistent with responses from last year, and again, suggests that whilst some grantholders may find evaluation and reporting time-consuming, they are understanding and appreciative of the benefits of doing so, and have observed the ways in which Youth Music uses their evaluation data.

In 2019 Youth Music released two research reports, 'The Sound of the Next Generation' (January 2019) and 'Exchanging Notes' (June 2019), and two questions were added to

this year's survey in order to gauge whether stakeholders had read/made use of these reports. Fifty one percent agreed or strongly agreed that they had read all or some of Youth Music's 'Sound of the Next Generation' report, and 48% agreed or strongly agreed that they had read all or some of Youth Music's 'Exchanging Notes' report. This is noticeably lower than more regularly authored reports such as the annual Impact Report (**Recommendation 5**).

When asked what other kinds of resources Youth Music should produce, 34 respondents provided answers which were broadly categorised into themes. These included:

Ways of connecting with other projects:

It would be useful to have a list of contacts and programme details for Youth Music grantholders in our area, so that we can help facilitate progression routes more effectively for young people. (See Recommendation 3).

Adapted measurement tools:

Evaluation frameworks for different situations ie mental health, young offenders

Maybe an app to assist in gathering consistent impact monitoring info across all projects. Something that was easy to use and engaging for young people that they could use on their phones and/or tablets.

Examples and templates of Youth Music requirements:

More practical templates for letters of agreements/evaluation questionnaires etc.

Examples of wording for when we make applications as sometimes we get a bit hung up with how to concisely put things.

Evidence-based reports on specific topics:

Perhaps something more regional too that acknowledges the different challenges in communities and regions across the country

Existing Youth Music resources (reports, examples of good practice) in different formats:

Video/infographic summaries of the above reports

Video examples of good EY practice

2.2 Relationship management

When asked about their relationships with Youth Music staff, 88% of current or previous grantholders agreed/strongly agreed that they felt comfortable approaching Youth Music staff with a problem, whilst 80% agreed/strongly agreed that Youth Music staff members are flexible with the requirements of their grant. In addition, 90% agreed/strongly agreed that Youth Music staff respond to their queries efficiently. This is broadly consistent with last year's answers, albeit slightly lower by one or two percent in each question.

Twenty two respondents opted to leave additional comments about their relationship with Youth Music staff, with most comments including examples of positive experiences, particularly in relation to flexibility:

The YM staff have been consistently helpful and flexible. We feel we have a positive relationship with the organisation, and they have one with us which is really important for getting the most out of the grants.

Changes on the ground after applying made some fairly significant changes to the project and budget necessary. YM staff were understanding and flexible, and we were able to deliver a revised project successfully.

A small number of respondents left more neutral or negative comments relating to the nature of their communications with Youth Music – usually because they did not have any particularly memorable experiences of needing to approach Youth Music staff. One or two remaining comments highlighted specific examples of where respondents could have been given more support:

I'd have appreciated a call towards end of year 1, to help me focus on evaluation, and verbally help me with uploading blog etc. A call from YM to my [mobile phone] would be better than me having to ring.

2.3 Improvements on grant-making processes

When asked, 'what is one thing we could do to improve our grant-making processes?' 49 respondents provided an answer. These answers were coded into broad categories:

Simplifying application and reporting processes:

Make the application and reporting process simpler and less long-winded

Think about reducing the amount of information required for smaller grants

Increasing flexibility in application and reporting processes:

Be less demanding that everything fits YM's framework and much less demanding of the administrative time it takes to complete. Other funders are much better in this respect.

Potentially build in a little more flexibility into the reporting process. That said, having an interim report over the phone rather than a written form is excellent!

Increase face-to-face meetings with applicants and grantholders:

Arrange a meeting with our grants officer earlier - I only managed to meet ours in London - but she was very nice when I finally did!

Offer application and project writing workshops

There were also several one-off comments which didn't quite fit into the above themes, which included suggestions such as improvements to the grants portal, reducing the amount of match funding required, and aligning evaluation processes with those of other funders.

These responses showed some similarities with responses from last year, and in particular, comments about the restrictive nature of Youth Music applications (including word counts) and evaluation reporting are appearing frequently in multiple responses to this year's survey, in line with answers to questions from last year's survey (**Recommendation 6**).

However, interestingly there has been a considerable drop in comments relating to the turnaround time between application and notification of Youth Music's funding decisions. This has long been a trend in responses to the Stakeholder Survey, and recommendations have previously been put in place to provide further clarification on Youth Music's grantmaking and assessment processes, including timescales, in order to

aid applicants' understanding of the reasons for a 3-month turnaround time between application and notification. We will continue to monitor responses related to this topic in particular, but this lack of complaint about the turnaround times in this year's survey could suggest the additional information is sufficient.

Alongside these suggested improvements, however, there were also several respondents who reported being satisfied with the grantmaking process, and had no immediate suggestions to give:

I'm genuinely very impressed with and grateful for the processes in place!

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 specific areas. Respondents rated 'Measuring the impact of your work' as the most successful aspect, with 80% rating the level of support given by Youth Music as above average, followed by 78% rating support in 'Improving the quality of your work' as above average.

Respondents were asked to select the aspect for which they would most like further support from Youth Music (Figure 7). Fifty eight percent of respondents requested more support in enhancing their organisational sustainability, followed by support to facilitate collaboration with other organisations (54%). These two most popular areas for further support are consistent with responses from the last three years, suggesting that this continues to be a priority for the organisations Youth Music supports. It is anticipated that the proposed simplification of application/evaluation processes as detailed elsewhere in this report will begin to contribute to organisational sustainability in terms of freeing up grantholders' time. In addition, Youth Music will seek to host a series of grantholder gatherings in 2020 in order to facilitate further collaboration between funded organisations (**Recommendation 7**).

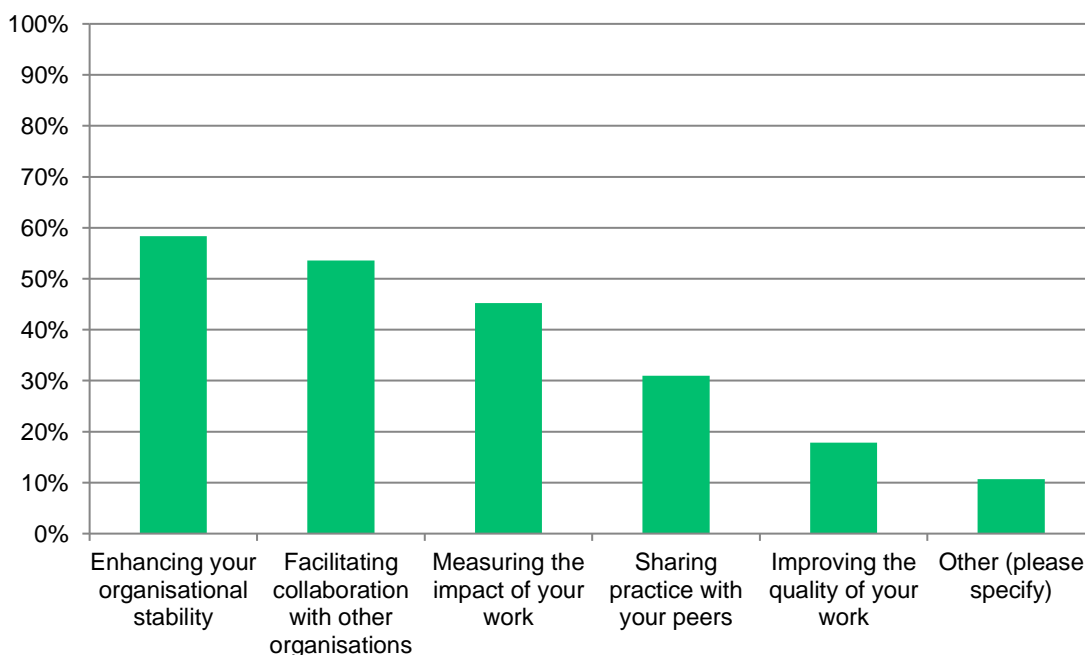


Figure 7. Aspects where grantholders would like further support from Youth Music.

Interestingly, although support with 'measuring the impact of your work' was rated as the most successful area of Youth Music's impact on this scale, in the following question about where respondents would like more help, 45% (n=38) also selected this as an

area requiring further attention. This, when paired with some of the qualitative responses to earlier questions about Youth Music’s grantmaking processes suggests that although support in impact measurement and evaluation appears to be largely successful, more attention needs to be given to this by Youth Music staff in the coming year (**Please see Recommendation 4**).

Using a seven-point Likert scale, we asked respondents how they would rate Youth Music’s overall impact on their organisation. Ninety people responded to this question, giving an overall rating average of 5.94 out of 7. Eighty four percent of respondents rated Youth Music’s impact on their organisation as above average, with 43% selecting the highest option of 7/7 (labelled ‘significant impact’). On the same scale, we then asked respondents to rate Youth Music’s overall impact on their wider field of work. Seventy six percent of respondents rated Youth Music’s impact on their wider field of work as above average – a weighted average of 5.46 out of 7, and a very slight drop from last year’s result.

4. Music Education Hubs

All respondents to the Stakeholder Survey (including those who had been unsuccessful in their funding applications over the financial year) answered questions about their relationships with, and opinions on, Music Education Hubs (MEHs).

Just under two thirds of respondents indicated that they were somehow affiliated with their local MEH, either as a lead organisation, member of the steering committee, or an associate organisation. The remaining 38% (n=37) were not involved with their local MEH, and although there were not many trends amongst these respondents in terms of the regions in which they were operating, almost three quarters (73%, n=27) were from organisations with an annual turnover of £500,000 or less.

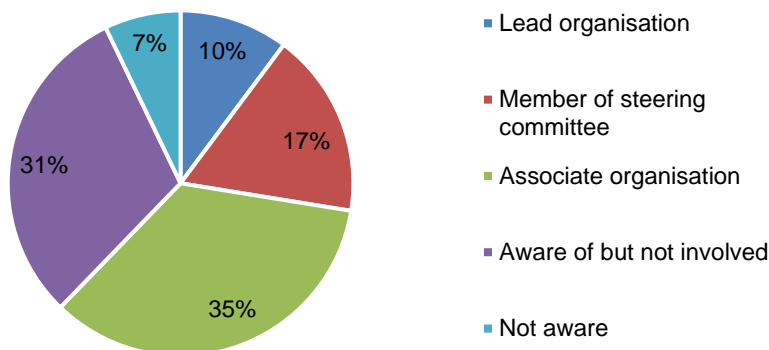


Figure 8. Respondents’ relationships to their local Music Education Hub

Respondents were also asked how many MEHs their organisation was related to overall. The majority (80%) indicated that they were related to 4 MEHs or fewer, with 9% telling us they were related to 10 or more, and the remaining 11% falling somewhere between 5 and 9 MEHs.

When asked about the extent to which their local MEH caters for the needs of children in challenging circumstances, 82 respondents gave ratings on a 7-point Likert scale, returning a weighted average of 4.3 out of 7, with 44% rating their local MEH’s success in this area as above average. Twenty one percent rated their local MEH as below average, and the remaining 35% respondent neutrally. This is an improvement from last

year's result, which saw 32% of respondents rating their local MEH's offer for children in challenging circumstances as below average.

Fifty three respondents left additional comments about what MEHs could do better to cater for the needs of children facing barriers to participation. These answers were coded into the following themes:

Improved communication with other music providers:

Work with specialist Youth Services and or Fund A Youth Music organisations to develop targeted musical activities for young people in challenging circumstances.

Working closer with all Youth Music grant holders because our expertise is working with children from challenging circumstances

Financial support for CCC and the organisations who work with them:

Access more money to create a broader outreach programme

Be able to draw in additional but regular financial support to widen its remissions capability

Adapting their content or priorities:

Reconsider traditional learning structures

To move further away from the old Music Service model (which the Hub is now doing) and to celebrate music made by more different groups. To continue the discussions about what quality looks and sounds like for different groups.

Actively target groups or organisations not currently receiving provision:

Proactively Target them and re-assess what offers would best suit their needs.

Better at targeted SEND support and low income families

Advocacy and awareness raising:

Advocate more strongly for the important of music to support children's learning and personal development.

Challenge local secondary schools to continue offering GCSE music on the curriculum!

Although the feedback given on MEHs here is broadly more positive than it has been in previous surveys, there are still evidently many suggestions from stakeholders as to how MEHs can better cater for the needs of children facing barriers. A new Youth Music fund specifically targeted at MEH lead organisations who have not previously received Youth Music funding was launched in 2019 with the aim of enabling MEH lead organisations to develop their musically inclusive practice (**Recommendation 8**).

5. The Youth Music Network

All respondents were asked to rate their agreement with statements about the Youth Music Network, on a four-point Likert scale. Of 99 respondents to this question, 93% agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the Youth Music Network to other music education professionals, and 91% agreed or strongly agreed that the Youth Music Network is a useful resource, even for those who are not applying for funding. These findings are somewhat higher than the results from last year's survey (87% and 85% respectively) and may be due to the redesign and redevelopment of the platform in 2018.

Eighty percent agreed or strongly agreed that the Youth Music Network newsletter is useful and relevant to their work – a small drop from last year’s 86%.

When asked to select how they use the Youth Music Network, 81% of respondents told us that they use it to download resources such as the Quality Framework, which is a significant increase from the 66% who told us this last year. Sixty three percent also told us that they use the Youth Music Network to download research reports, and 45% to read blogs authored by other Youth Music Network users. Also common was searching for Youth Music funded projects (43%) writing blogs (37%) and posting events (34%). These most common uses of the Youth Music Network are broadly consistent with last year’s results. Less common uses of the Youth Music Network included searching for events (26%) and using the evaluation builder (24%), contacting other Youth Music Network users (14%) advertising job vacancies (13%), searching for jobs (11%) and contacting the Youth Music team (11%).

When asked how often they use the Youth Music Network, 47% of respondents said they use it a few times a year, with 36% selecting ‘monthly’. Fewer claimed to use it more frequently, with 4% selecting ‘fortnightly’, and 5% telling us they used it weekly. Nobody told us they used it daily, and the remaining respondents told us they use the Youth Music Network yearly (1%) or less than yearly (5%), with 2% claiming to have never used it.

Sixteen respondents left additional comments about the Youth Music Network. Since the redesign of the Youth Music Network in 2018, there have been considerably fewer comments about the technical issues of using the Youth Music Network (although there was a small amount of comments in this year’s survey which appeared to be referencing specific technical glitches). The majority of constructive comments, however, tended to focus on the time pressures on organisations leading to less use of the Youth Music Network than some would like:

I am conscious that we should use it more and in all honesty it is pressure of work that sometimes makes it difficult to find the time to use it properly. We have discussed this with Youth Music and we do see the resource as valuable and we do want to engage more with it.

These comments did, however, appear alongside several positive comments about the Youth Music Network, particularly ones describing how the tool enables users to connect with other organisations:

Very useful resource and it is good for reading about what other projects are about and if a connection can be made with them.

Many of these results are considerably more positive than responses to questions about the Youth Music Network in last year’s Stakeholder Survey. After the redevelopment of the Youth Music Network, there was a recommendation to monitor responses to these questions in future editions of the survey in order to gauge whether the redevelopment has made a difference to people’s quality of experience when using the Youth Music Network. Whilst we will continue to monitor this progress and consider how the Youth Music Network can be the most effective tool for grantholders and others working in the music education sector, the general uplift in both quantitative and qualitative responses this year (as well as the decrease in respondents’ comments confusing the Youth Music Network tool with Youth Music more generally!) suggests that the Youth Music Network is proving to be more beneficial to its users responding to this survey.

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. Ninety eight respondents chose to answer this question, and the weighted rating average for this question was 6.13 out of 7, which is consistent with the result of 6.18 out of 7 from last year's survey.

Eighty eight percent (n=86) rated Youth Music above average, with 53% (n=52) selecting the highest point of the scale (labelled 'very good'). This is also broadly consistent with last year's survey, although a slight drop from last year's results of 92% and 57% respectively.

However, only 2% (n=2) of respondents rated Youth Music as below average, whereas 5% did so last year, and no respondents selected the bottom point of the scale, labelled 'very poor', whereas 1% did so last year. The remaining 10% (n=10) of respondents rated Youth Music as 'average'.

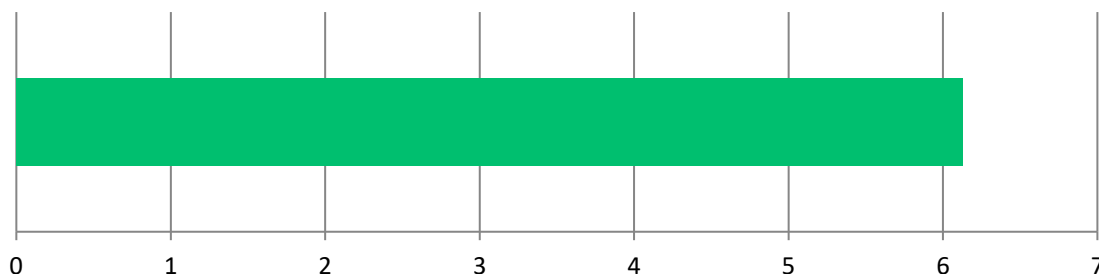


Figure 11. Rating average of Youth Music as a funder overall (6.13/7).

We also asked respondents to tell us the one word they would use to describe Youth Music. The most commonly cited word was 'supportive' (consistent with the most common word in last year's survey), followed by 'inclusive', 'essential', 'effective' and 'open'.



Figure 12. 'What one word would you use to describe Youth Music?': word cloud.

Finally, 29 respondents took up the opportunity to leave additional comments, which

were categorised into themes:

Additional comments about the application/reporting processes:

Great organisation and support , but I spent a lot of time applying and then worrying about all the monitoring and the fact that I've spent all the money but there's no guarantee I'll get the last 10%.

The funding, once achieved is great and in some ways YM is great but the process of application is pretty awful - with outcomes and indicators dictated and we have to read the mind of the grant officer to get the words right.

Comments about Youth Music staff:

I have been greatly impressed by the Youth Music staff, I find the organisation to be responsive to both young people and our organisations needs. A human approach goes a long way!

All members of the team I've worked with to date are smart, strategic, approachable and collaborative. They genuinely listen and understand that a funder needs to learn from those they are funding and vice versa, i.e. that it's a two way partnership. The team are warm but also objective at the same time: not an easy combination!

Comments about how Youth Music has benefited organisational development:

Youth Music has innovated our practice as an organisation and improved our understanding of effective evaluation, best practice and sustainable growth in our workforce.

The development of our music ambitions and the delivery of our projects have been possible because of Youth Music, not just through their funding but because of their continuing advice and support

Comments about particular grantmaking decisions:

It can be frustrating that there is a geographical consideration in allocating funds. By this I mean that a strong bid may be rejected because a lot of funding has gone to a particular region already, when a weaker lower impact bid is funded elsewhere because there is less competition for funding in some regions.

Felt supported by Youth Music throughout the grant. However, we were very surprised that our application for a continuation grant was unsuccessful as the programme was so successful.

Comments about Youth Music's strategic role in music education:

Youth Music have changed the funding, practice sharing and policy-shaping landscapes and networks for informal music education for the better.

I have worked on Youth Music projects for over a decade in the capacity of music leader, project coordinator, and now manager of music programmes. It has always been a sincere and supportive funder of music making for the many, but feels now as if it really is shaping the debate and working effectively with grantholders to change young peoples' lives, through music, for the better. The money it distributes seems better spent, in my opinion, and the oversight and support it provides more grounded and responsive. I see every day the seismic difference Youth Music makes to young people's lives and am proud to play a modest part in its ongoing success.

7. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Youth Music should review its application and reporting processes to determine if and how they could be made more accessible, particularly to small or under-resourced organisations.

Recommendation 2: Youth Music should ensure all application and evaluation reporting templates available on the Youth Music Network are consistent with the online forms on the portal, paying particular attention to the guidance provided on word counts for each question.

Recommendation 3: On Youth Music's website, there is an interactive map of England which shows all currently active projects in each region of the country and gives top-level details of the project, organisation, and target audiences. Youth Music could publicise this better to ensure that prospective applicants and grantholders are aware of the other currently funded organisations in their regions.

Recommendation 4: Youth Music should explore the reasons for the slight decline in satisfaction at evaluation support offered to grantholders to identify where further support may be needed. This should include consulting stakeholders on topics such as updated evaluation guidance, training, and flexibility around reporting to Youth Music.

Recommendation 5: Youth Music should consider how it can engage current and previous grantholders as an audience for its research outputs.

Recommendation 6: Youth Music should consider extending the word limits on application and reporting forms.

Recommendation 7: Youth Music should host a series of grantholder gatherings in 2020 in order to facilitate further connection and collaboration between funded organisations.

Recommendation 8: Youth Music should give consideration as to how best it can monitor the impact of their new Music Education Hub Development Fund on hubs lead organisations' inclusive practice.