



TOWARDS AN ARTS AND CULTURE STRATEGIC
PLAN

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report supports the creation of an Arts and Culture Strategic Plan for the Etheridge Shire Council, incorporating feedback and insights from community stakeholders. The consultation process involved two engagement methods: an online survey open for community feedback from July 20 to August 24, which received 21 responses, and in-person presentations and consultations facilitated by Arts Queensland's Regional Arts Services Network (RASN) at two events, the Mt Surprise Camp Draft in July and the Etheridge Show/Forsayth Turnout in August, with around 40 participants involved in these discussions.

The report is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the background and context, detailing the report's objectives and the methodology employed in its preparation. The second section summarises the key findings derived from stakeholder consultations. The final section presents the data collected from online surveys and the Have Your Say in-person consultations.

The report's main findings are categorised into three primary themes from the consultation: insights from demographic data, analysis of participation data, and feedback regarding the Council's role in arts and cultural development.

The demographic assessment reveals a significant engagement level among younger to middle-aged adults within the community. A considerable number of respondents are hobbyist artists connected to an arts organisation, willing to volunteer their time and expertise. There is a clear lack of involvement from Indigenous communities, which diminishes the diversity of perspectives. The data also shows a representation imbalance across different areas, with over half of the survey respondents living in Georgetown. This suggests that the upcoming Arts and Culture Strategic Plan should focus on outreach and programming that resonates with a wider demographic. Such an approach would promote a more inclusive atmosphere, encouraging participation from a varied audience and ultimately enhancing the community's cultural richness.

The participation data shows that the community values personal relationships and accessible venues for cultural activities, while also being willing to travel to larger cities for better opportunities. Engagement levels vary, with attendance ranging from twice a year to monthly or weekly. Despite a perceived gap in arts engagement, there is significant participation in amateur activities like woodworking, drawing, and photography. The findings indicate a strong preference for workshops, local performances, community events, and exhibitions. Therefore, this suggests that the new Arts and Culture Strategic Plan should enhance offerings in Etheridge Shire, focusing on venues and experiences that resonate with the community.

Feedback regarding the Council's role in arts and cultural development reveals a generally positive perception, particularly in areas such as venue quality, historical site upkeep, and grant distribution. However, there are areas that require attention and improvement. Priorities identified for the new Arts and Culture Strategic Plan include initiatives aimed at improving health and wellbeing, increasing grant funding, expanding the range and number of arts and cultural activities available, including more workshops and professional development opportunities, and promoting local heritage through arts, history trails, and cultural tourism.

Securing the Council's full support and commitment to the arts is vital for future developments. Building strong relationships and demonstrating the concrete benefits of arts initiatives will be crucial in helping the Council recognise their significance. Ultimately, collaboration between community advocates and political leaders will be essential for fostering sustainable growth and development in the region's arts sector.

SECTION 1

1.1 Background and Context

Etheridge Shire Council has requested the services of an arts consultant to undertake the development of an Arts and Culture Strategic Plan that is in step with Council’s corporate objectives, community expectations and the Shire’s new economic development strategies.

Council’s strategic commitment to elevating and supporting the Shire’s people, its identity and economic prosperity lay a strong foundation for the development of an arts and culture strategic plan that will guide Council’s investment and approach to cultural development over the next three-five years.

Recognising and integrating the Shire’s wealth of creative and events-based assets into Council’s current tourism, branding and economic development strategies will help to deliver the following corporate objectives:

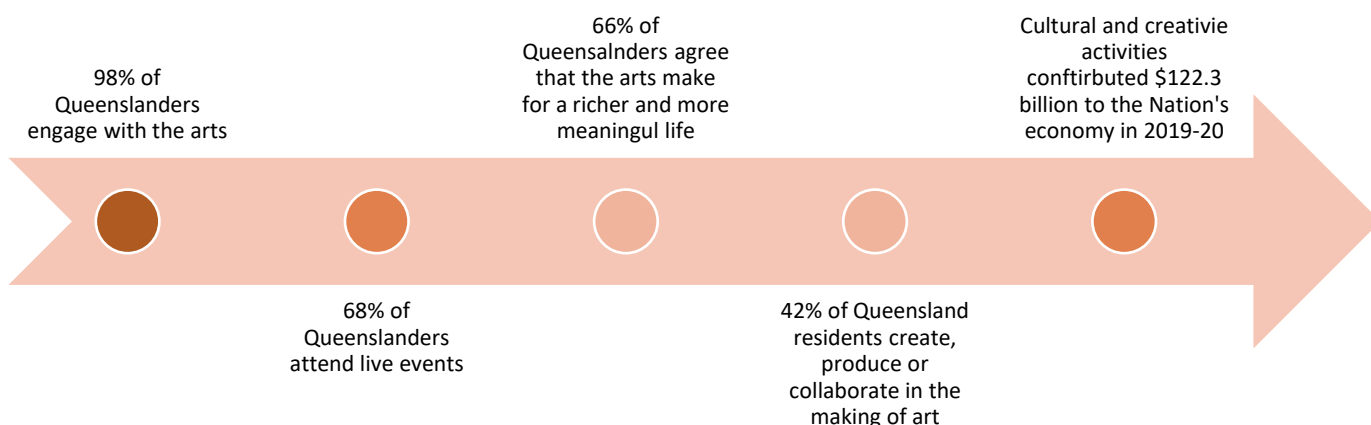
Corporate Aim 3: A diversified economic development ensures a prosperous shire

Corporate Aim 4: Quality Social infrastructure makes the shire a desirable place to live

Corporate Aim 5: Best practice corporate governance and organisational excellence

1.2 Why is an Arts and Culture Strategic Plan Important?

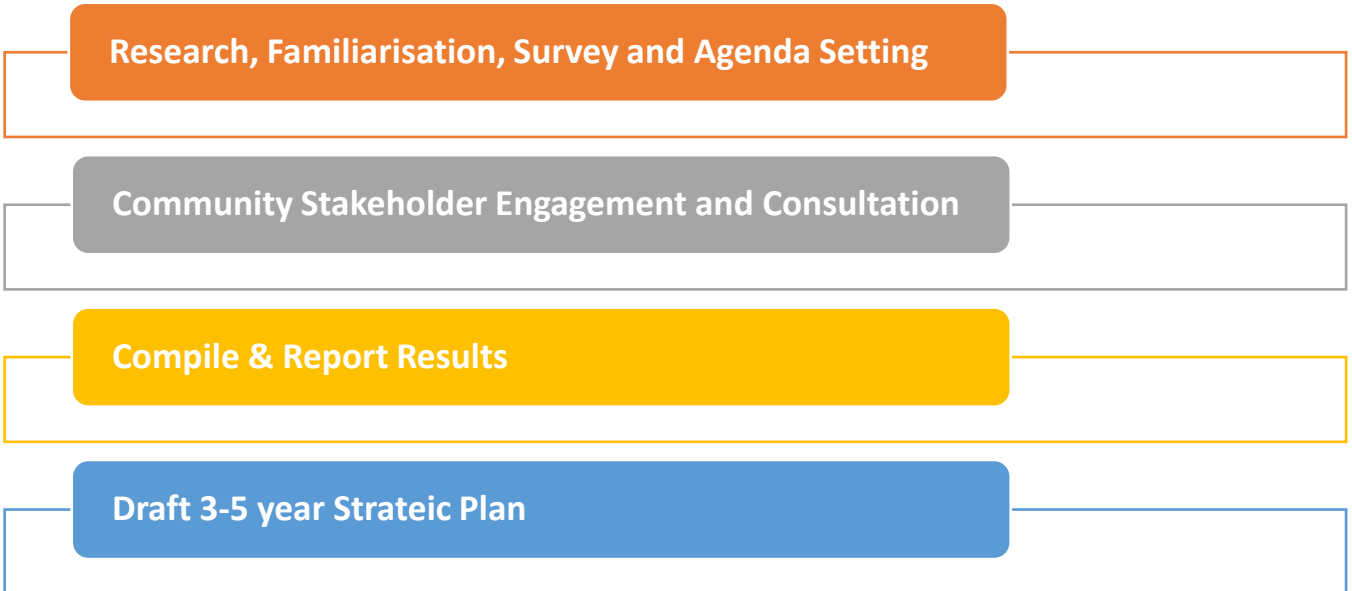
Research shows that investment in arts and cultural infrastructure and programs has the ability to stimulate economic growth and create resilient, inclusive and connected communities.



The development of an Arts and Culture Strategic Plan is an important and timely initiative for Etheridge Shire Council. It will provide a clear vision and strategic road map for the future and lay weight to Council’s current plans to position the Shire as a unique destination for domestic and international visitors. As a forward-thinking document, it will connect the community’s aspirations and priorities for the future with available resources and assets.

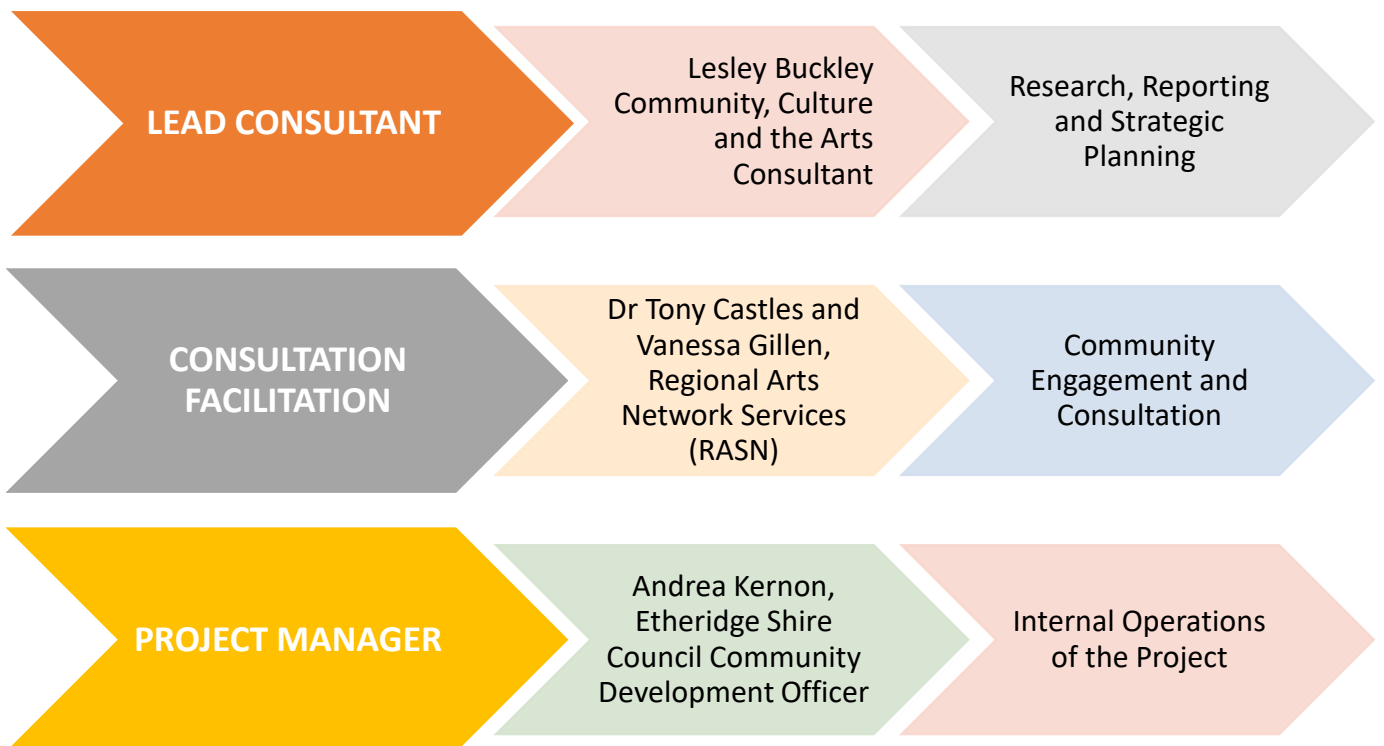
1.3 Strategic Plan Process

The process and methodology for the delivery of the Arts and Culture Strategic Plan includes the following scope of works.



1.4 Strategic Plan Project Team

The Strategic Plan is being developed by the following team of professionals who have specific roles and responsibilities.

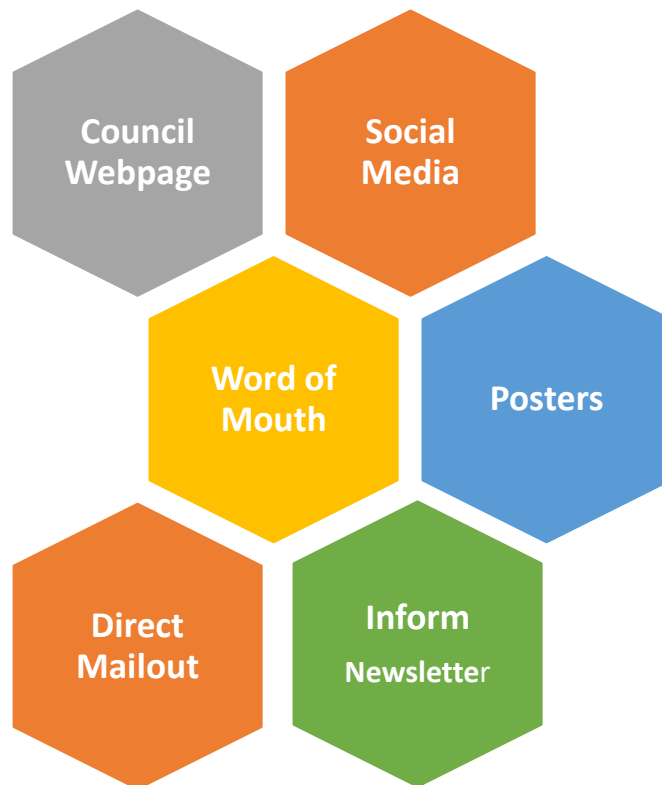


1.5 Consultation Process

People-centred consultation is at the heart of the project, with feedback, advice and observations from a variety of stakeholders from across the townships of Georgetown, Forsyth, Mt Surprise & Einasleigh helping to shape a place-based Strategic Plan. The purpose of community consultation has been to engage essential community stakeholders to provide targeted feedback, input and ideas.

1.5.1 How we told people about the project

Various platforms were utilized to inform the community about Council's intention to develop and arts and cultural strategy for the Shire. This multifaceted approach aimed not only to inform the community about the initiative but also to actively encourage stakeholder participation.



1.5.2 How we engaged with the community

Community consultation included two levels of engagement:

1. On line Survey

An online survey was available for community input from July 20 to August 24, 2024. The Survey contained 12 Questions that were framed around the following three themes:

- Understanding the demographics of respondents, ie age, gender and where respondents live
- How people participated in the arts and cultural events and activities
- Council's role in arts and cultural events and activities

A total of number of 21 people from across the shire contributed to the survey.

2. Have Your Say Presentation and Consultation

Arts Queensland's Regional Arts Services Network (RASN) conducted face-to-face presentations and consultations with community members in two locations:

- **Mt Surprise Camp Draft** in July
- **Etheridge Show/Forsyth Turnout** in August

During these events, *Have Your Say* Notice Boards were utilised by RASN facilitators to engage attendees and gather feedback on six key questions regarding:

- The significance of arts and culture in the community
- Methods of discovering arts and cultural events
- Levels of participation
- Frequency of involvement
- Venues for attending such activities, and
- The key arts and cultural priorities that the Council should address over the next three years.

Approximately 40 people took part in these discussions.

Who is RASN

Established in 2018, RASN aim to leverage the arts to create opportunities for artists and organisations in regional areas, driving initiatives that lead to new investment, job creation, and improved access to quality arts experiences. The network supports local arts services statewide, fostering vibrant communities and regional development. In partnership with Regional Development Australia Tropical North and Cook shire Council, RASN delivers arts services in Aurukun, Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Cook, Douglas, Etheridge, Hope Vale, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mapoon, Mareeba, Napranum, Northern Peninsula Area, Pormpuraaw, Tablelands, Torres Strait Island, Weipa Town Authority, Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah.

SECTION 2

2.1 Key Findings from Community Consultation

This section of the report summarises key results from the online surveys and the in-person "Have Your Say" consultation. These main findings are organised into the three central themes of the consultation. The aim is to present a clear and concise summary of the data collected, which will serve as a foundation for the arts and culture strategic plan and decision-making.

2.1.1 What the Demographic Data is Telling Us

- Overall, the demographic data indicates a notable level of involvement among younger to middle-aged adults in the community. This age group's prominence may be attributed to several factors, such as greater access to digital platforms, a readiness to share their views, or a wider trend of younger adults pursuing cultural experiences for social interaction, personal growth, and community engagement. Notably, a significant portion of respondents identifies as hobbyist artists affiliated with an arts organisation with a preparedness to volunteer their time and skills.
- Conversely, the data reveals a markedly lower participation rate among male community members, individuals aged 18-25, and those over 56 years old. This pattern is not uncommon and may be influenced by a range of factors including social, economic and cultural influences. There is also a noticeable absence of engagement with Indigenous communities. This absence is concerning, as Indigenous peoples often possess unique perspectives and knowledge that can enrich community discussions and initiatives. The failure to include these voices not only undermines the diversity of input but also perpetuates historical patterns of marginalisation.
- Additionally, the data highlights that more than half of the survey participants reside in Georgetown, with fewer respondents from other areas of the Shire. This suggests that Georgetown is a central hub for the population within the Shire, potentially reflecting its appeal or accessibility compared to other areas. In contrast, the survey shows that a smaller proportion of participants hail from other regions within the Shire, highlighting a disparity in representation among the various locales.
- The data implies that the new Arts and Culture Strategic Plan should tailor programming and outreach to better align with the interests and preferences of a broader demographic. By doing so, it can foster a more inclusive environment that encourages participation from a diverse audience, ultimately enriching the cultural landscape of the community. Understanding the geographic distribution and the concentration of respondents in Georgetown is crucial when considering resource allocation and future initiatives within the Shire.

2.1.2 What the Data on Participation in the Arts and Cultural Activities is Telling Us

- Overall, feedback indicates a strong preference for workshops, local shows, community events, museum and heritage exhibitions, visual art exhibitions, and music performances. Additionally, volunteering and attending events in person are also highly favoured. Notably, only 9% participate in educational programs, compared to 90.48% who expressed a desire to attend workshops. This discrepancy suggests a lack of available opportunities, indicating that future programming should prioritise more workshops and professional development initiatives.
- RASN's in-depth discussions with community members indicate a perceived gap in arts connection, yet there is significant participation in amateur activities like woodworking, metalworking, drawing, painting, and photography. The recent Etheridge Show/Forsyth Turnout in August highlighted strong interest and talent in arts, sculpture, and photography. Local engagement is further demonstrated by the Mt Surprise school violin group and events like "Bangin' in the Basalt," a school fundraiser, along with various school projects contributing to the arts showcase. While the current landscape of hobbyist arts activities is characterised by individual pursuits, the formation of an umbrella arts society has the potential to unite these efforts, encouraging collaboration and creating a more cohesive and dynamic arts community.
- The data underscores the varying levels of engagement among respondents, illustrating a spectrum of participation that ranges from at least every six months to more frequent once a month to once a week. This variation highlights differing interests and availability among community members and reflects diverse connections to the arts.
- A significant portion of the participants demonstrated a clear inclination towards traveling not only within Etheridge Shire but also to cities such as Cairns, Townsville, and Brisbane to participate in arts and cultural activities. This suggests that respondents would be open to exploring more vibrant arts and cultural experiences found in larger urban centres, if similar opportunities were available closer to home.
- When it comes to the preferred venues for the arts and cultural activities, results show that approximately half of the respondents (around 50%) expressed a strong preference for attending events in the comfort of their friends' and family members' homes. This preference highlights the importance of social connections and the value placed on intimate, personal settings for cultural engagement. It suggests that respondents may prioritize the communal and familial aspects of cultural experiences, favouring gatherings that foster close relationships and shared experiences.
- Respondents primarily learn about arts and cultural events through word of mouth and social media, which are the dominant communication channels. Furthermore, the Council's Inform Newsletter is recognized as an important source for information on these events.
- Participants were invited to contribute their thoughts by suggesting a variety of words that encapsulate the significance of arts and culture within the Etheridge community. This visual representation serves not only as a summary of the participants' sentiments but also as a testament to the vibrant cultural landscape that exists within Etheridge.
- Overall, the data implies that the new Arts and Culture Strategic Plan should aim to enhance the arts and cultural landscape within Etheridge Shire, leveraging the types of venues and arts and cultural experiences that resonate most with the community.

2.1.3 What the Data on Council's Role in the Arts and Cultural Development is Telling Us

- The overall assessment of the Council's existing arts and cultural program, activities, and services has been met with a generally positive response from the community. A significant portion of survey participants, approximately 70%, expressed satisfaction with the Council's venues and facilities, rating them as good to very good. This indicates a strong appreciation for the quality and availability of spaces that support artistic and cultural endeavours within the region.
- In terms of historical preservation, nearly half of the respondents conveyed that they found the maintenance of the region's historical sites to be satisfactory. This suggests that while there is room for improvement, the efforts made to uphold the integrity and accessibility of these important cultural landmarks are recognized by a substantial segment of the community.
- Furthermore, the Council's provision of grants and resources received an impressive endorsement, with around 84% of participants rating it as very good to good. This high level of approval reflects the effectiveness of the Council's initiatives in supporting local artists, cultural organizations, and community projects.
- However, feedback regarding the diversity of arts and cultural activities available reveal a more nuanced picture, with around 80% of respondents rating this aspect of Council's services as poor to reasonable. Accessibility and promotion of arts and cultural activities ratings were mixed, with 42% of respondents indicating that they found accessibility to be poor, while 36.84% rated it as good. These disparities highlight areas for improvement, as a considerable portion of the community feels they may be limited or inadequate.
- In terms of how Council could better support the diverse needs of the community and priorities for the future, the top-rated priorities include initiatives aimed at improving health and wellbeing, fostering collaboration and idea-sharing, increasing grant funding, expanding the range and number of arts and cultural activities available, including more workshops and professional development opportunities, and promoting significant local places and heritage assets through the development of arts and history trails and cultural tourism initiatives. In contrast, support First Nations artists and projects, was generally regarded as a lower priority. This disparity is at odds with both State and Federal government priorities which recognise the value and importance of First Nation's creative practice and arts and cultural experiences.
- Feedback statements from both the online survey and in-person discussions offered deeper insights into future priorities, especially highlighting the demand for increased year-round activities, including concerts, performances and workshops, throughout the entire shire.
- The survey findings, combined with insights from face-to-face discussions, highlight an appreciation for arts and cultural development within the community, as evidenced by the variety of opinions and suggestions received. However, gaining the Council's full backing and commitment to the arts is crucial for future progress. Establishing robust relationships and showcasing the tangible benefits of arts initiatives will be essential. Ultimately, collaboration between community advocates and political leaders will be the key to fostering sustainable growth and development of the arts in the region.

SECTION 3

3.1 Data from the Online Survey and Have Your Say Consultation

This section provides the data from the on-line surveys and *Have Your Say* in person consultation. It captures the key insights, trends, and feedback gathered from participants, highlighting the various perspectives and experiences shared during the process.

3.1.1 Data on Demographic Profile

Online Survey

The age distribution of participants in the online survey is depicted in Figure 1. The largest segment of respondents, accounting for 33%, fell within the 26-35 age range. Next, the 36-45 and 46-55 age groups each made up 19.05% of the total responses. In contrast, the younger cohort of 18-25 years and the older group of 56 years and above had significantly lower participation rates, each representing 9.52% of the overall responses.

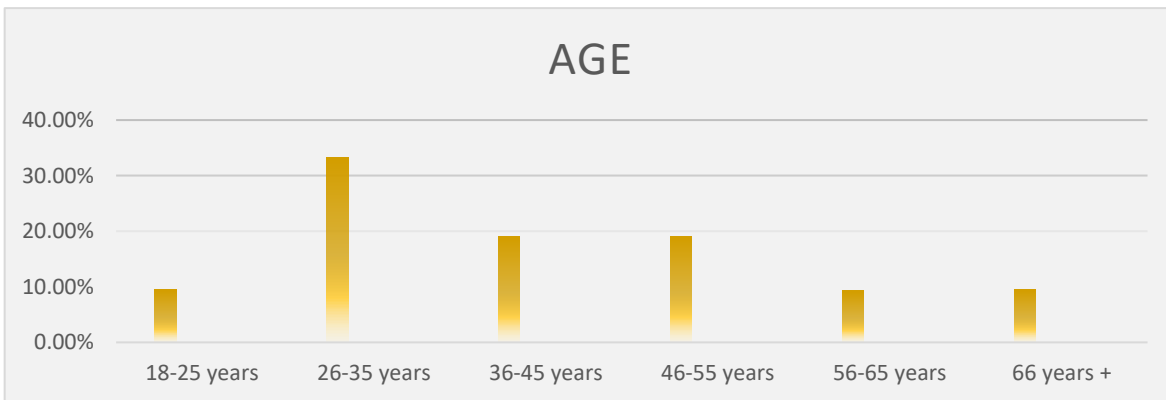


Figure 1: Percentage of online survey respondents by age group

Figure 2 illustrates the typical residence of participants in the online survey. The majority, comprising 57%, reside in Georgetown, while 15.79% are from Einasleigh. A minor portion, 5.26%, lives in Forsayth and Mount Surprise. Additionally, approximately 15% of respondents indicated they live outside these locations.

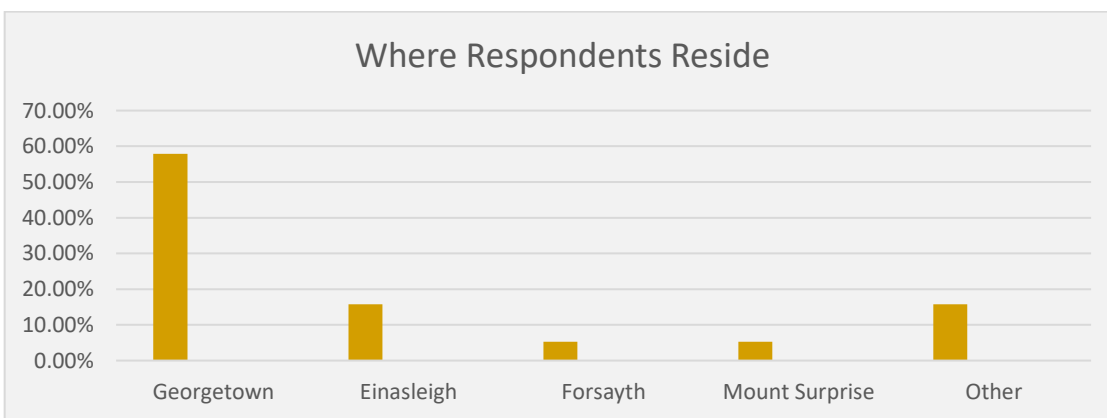


Figure 2 Percentage of online survey respondents by usual place of residence

Figure 3 depicts the gender distribution and participant identification from the online survey. A significant majority, 85.71%, of the respondents were female, whereas 14.29% identified as male. Additionally, only 9.52% of participants identified as First Nations, with no respondents reporting as non-English speaking or having a disability.

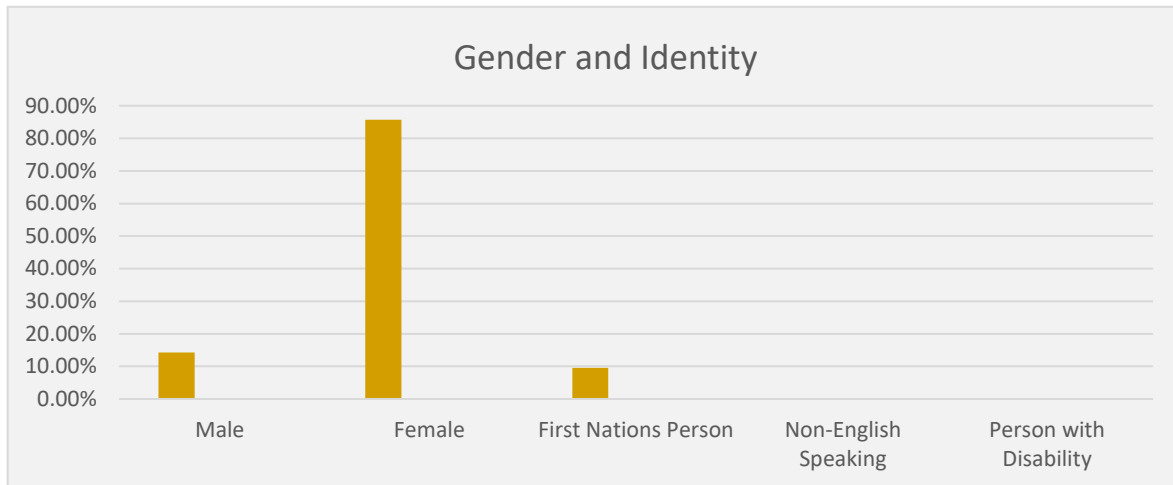


Figure 3: Percentage of online survey respondents by gender and identify

In terms of self-identification, Figure 4 illustrates a large majority, 86.67%, viewed themselves as hobbyist artists, with over one-third associated with an arts organization and 26.67% actively volunteering for different organizations or arts and cultural initiatives. Remarkably, none of the participants classified themselves as professional or emerging artists.

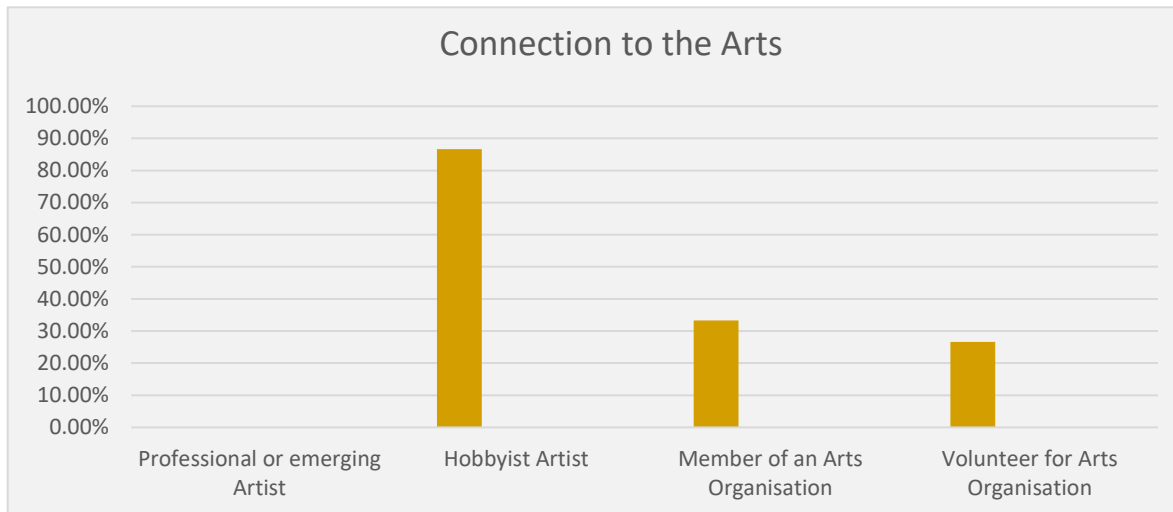


Figure 4: Percentage of online survey respondents' connection to the arts

Have Your Say Presentation and Discussion – 40 Responses

Observations from the two community consultations held at Mount Surprise Camp Draft and Etheridge Show and led by RASN, indicate:

- that while the demographic diversity of participants attending the events was extensive, the majority of those who took part in the *Have Your Say* discussions were primarily women within the 26 to 35 age range, with a strong interest in the arts and cultural activities. There was also a noticeable absence of engagement with Indigenous communities as well as a lack of acknowledgement of their contributions to region's arts and cultural landscape.
- the community places significant importance on active participation and appreciating its distinctive character. A deep local connection and familiarity are evident among residents. Family values and safety are paramount, fostering a protective atmosphere. While pride in the region is robust, there is hesitance to welcome outsiders to local events due to concerns about maintaining this sense of security.

3.1.2 Data on Participation in the Arts and Cultural Activities

Online Survey – 21 Responses

Figure 5 depicts the interests of respondents in various arts and cultural activities. Workshops are the most popular choice, with 90.48% expressing interest, followed by local shows and community events at 80.95%. Museums and heritage exhibitions, visual art exhibitions, and music performances each attract 42.86% of interest, while dance and theatre performances receive the least interest, at 28.57% and 23.81%, respectively.

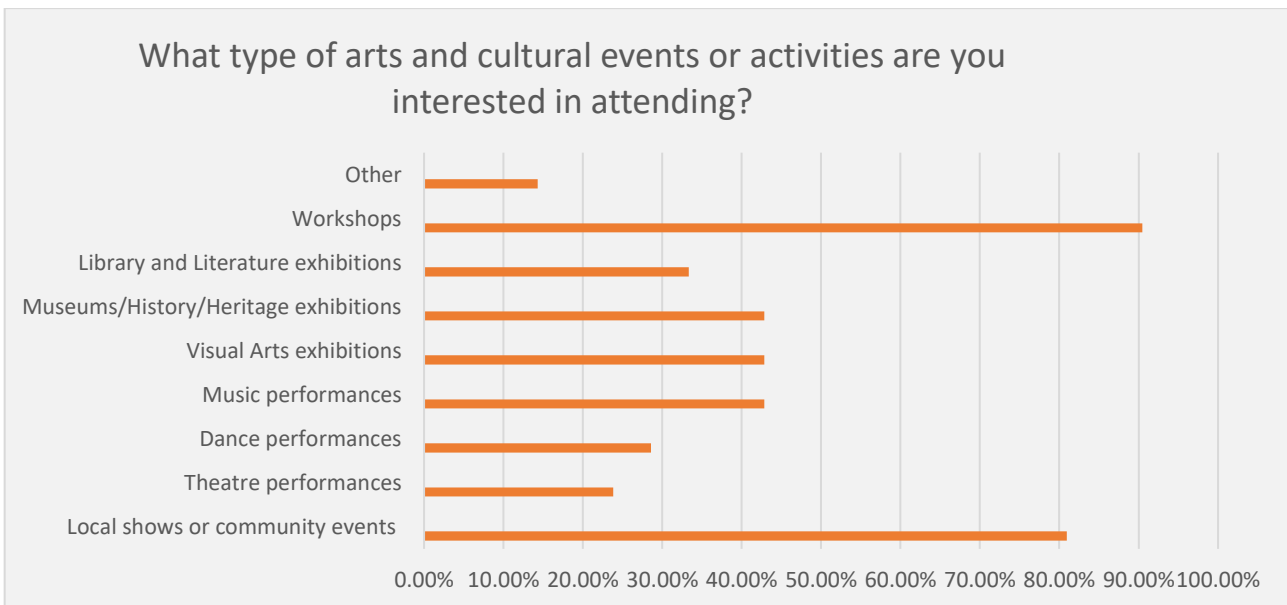


Figure 5: Percentage of online survey respondents' interest in various arts and cultural activities

Have Your Say Presentation and Discussion – 40 Responses

Figure 6 enhances the online survey findings by illustrating the engagement of respondents involved in face-to-face discussions with arts and culture. Volunteering and in-person attendance each accounted for more than a third of the preferences. In contrast, creating art and educational initiatives received relatively low scores, while online viewing of the arts was identified as the least preferred method of participation.

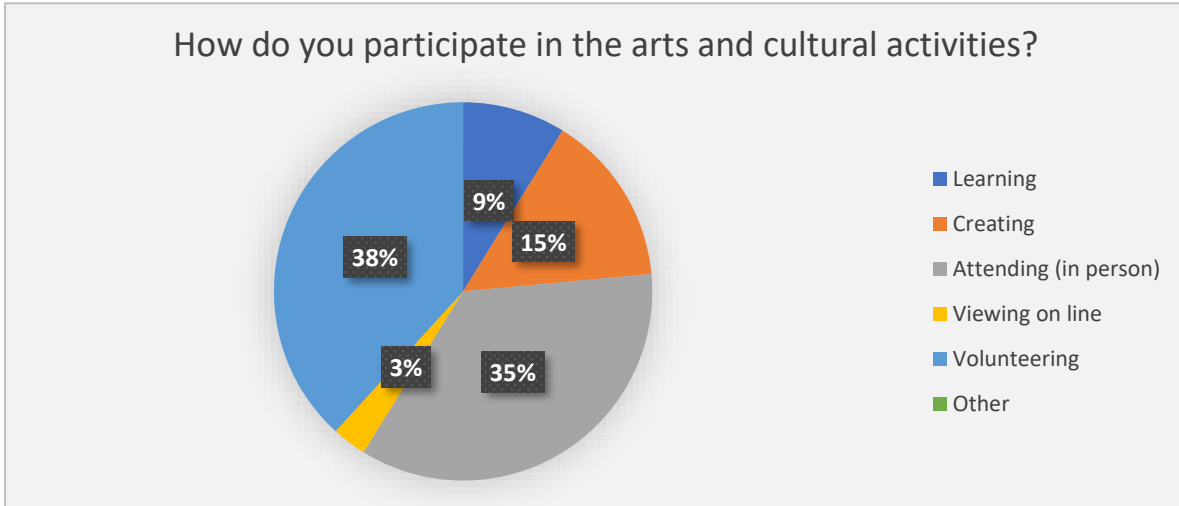


Figure 6: Percentage of respondents involved in face-to-face discussions engagement in various arts and cultural activities

Online Survey – 21 Responses

Figure 7 illustrates the frequency of participation in arts and cultural events among online survey respondents. More than half (52.38%) engage in activities approximately every six months. A smaller proportion (19.05%) attends once a month, while 14.29% participate weekly, and only 4.76% do so on a weekly basis. Additionally, 9.52% of respondents report no involvement in arts and cultural activities whatsoever.

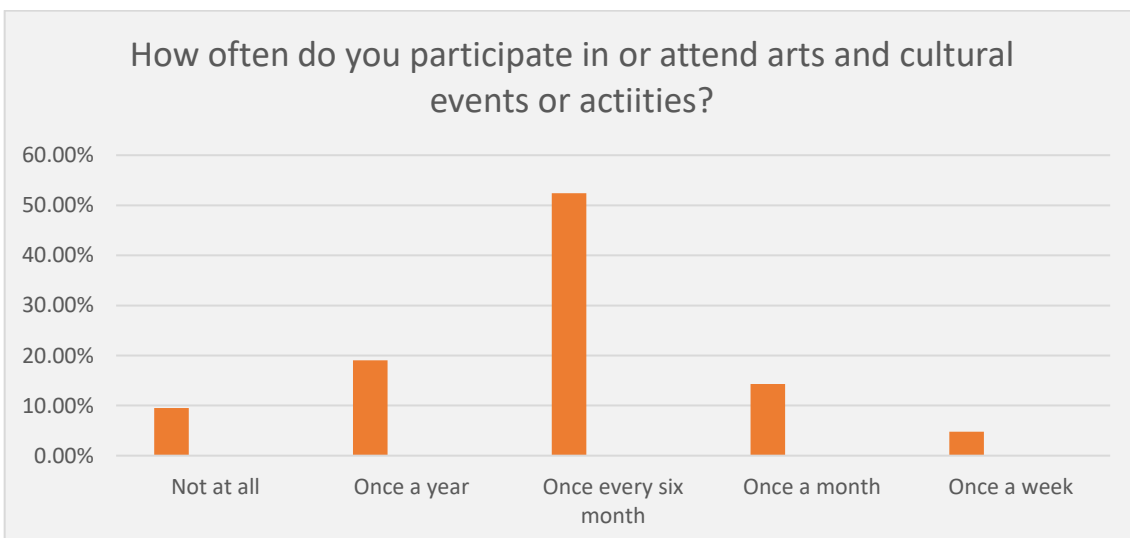


Figure 7: Percentage of online survey frequency of participation in arts and cultural activities

Have Your Say Presentation and Discussion – 40 Responses

Figure 8 reaffirms the online survey results by depicting the frequency of individuals' participation in arts and cultural events. It shows that 41% engage in activities every six months, 33% do so monthly, and 26% attend once a week.

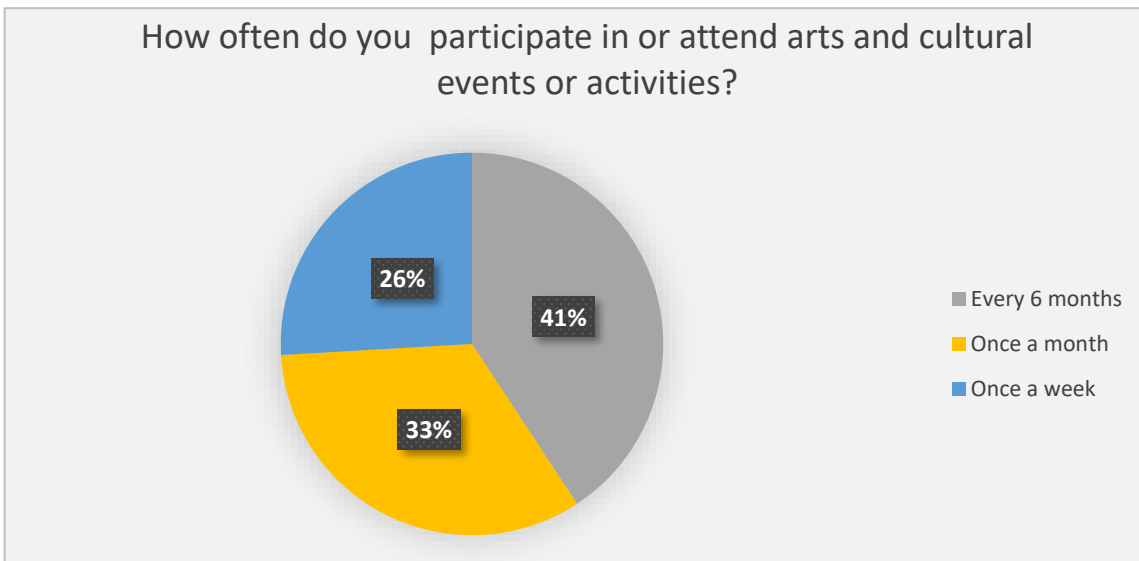


Figure 8: Percentage of online survey frequency of participation in arts and cultural activities

Online Survey – 21 Responses

Figure 9 illustrates that 57.89% of respondents are inclined to travel to locations within the Etheridge Shire as well as outside the region to cities such as Cairns, Townsville or Brisbane to engage in arts and cultural events or activities. Additionally, 52.63% indicated that they prefer attending such activities at friends' and family members' homes, while local Community Halls and Civic Centres are favoured by 42.11%. In contrast, the local library and places of worship received a minimal preference, scoring only 5.26%.

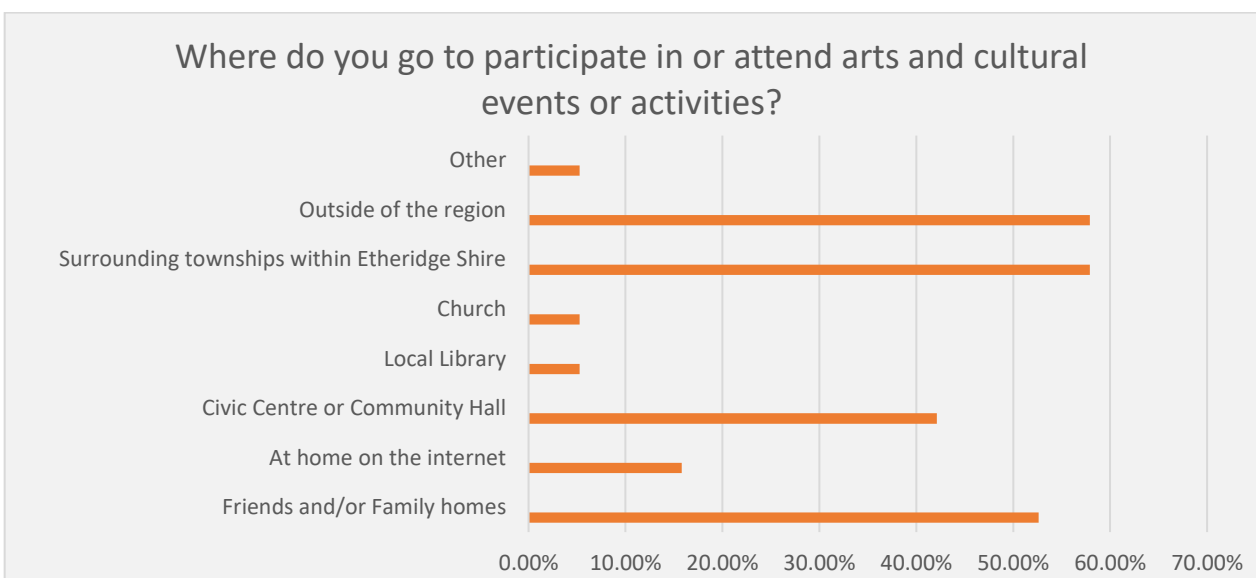


Figure 9: Percentage of online survey preference on where they participate in arts and cultural activities

Have Your Say Presentation and Discussion – 40 Responses

Figure 10 corroborates the online survey findings, indicating that 26% of respondents are open to traveling within the shire and 16% outside the region for arts and cultural activities. Additionally, 21% prefer attending events at friends' and family members' homes, while 19% opt for local community halls and Civic Centres. Conversely, the local library and places of worship received minimal interest, with only 5% of respondents favouring these venues.

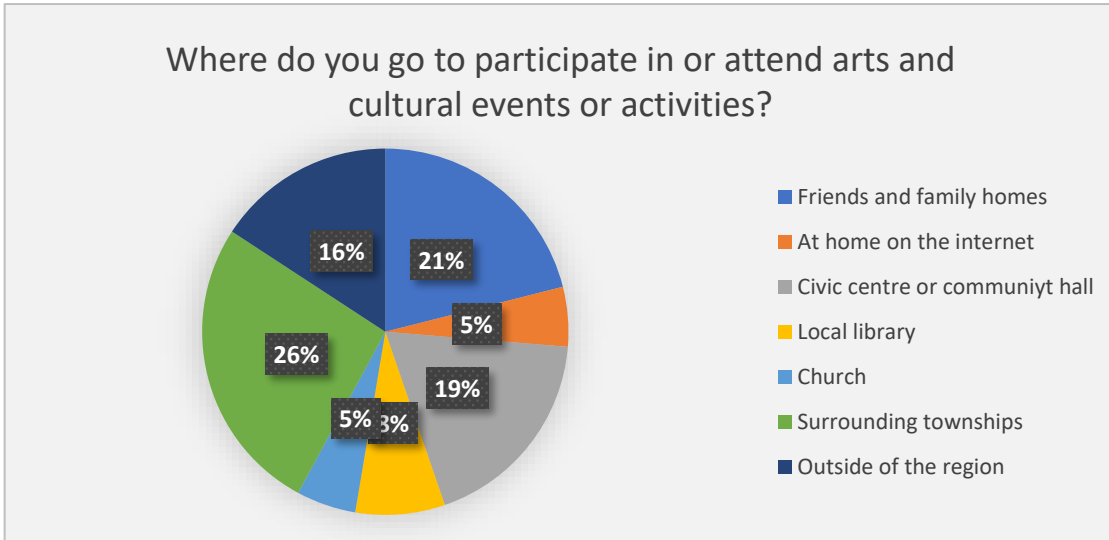


Figure 10: Percentage of respondents involved in face-to-face discussions on where they participate in arts and cultural activities

Online Survey – 21 Responses

Figure 11 depicts how respondents discover arts and cultural events in the Shire, with word of mouth and social media serving as the main communication channels, representing 66.67%. Community notice boards contribute 19.05%, while traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television are less influential at 9.52%. Additionally, several respondents identified the Inform Newsletter as another source of information.

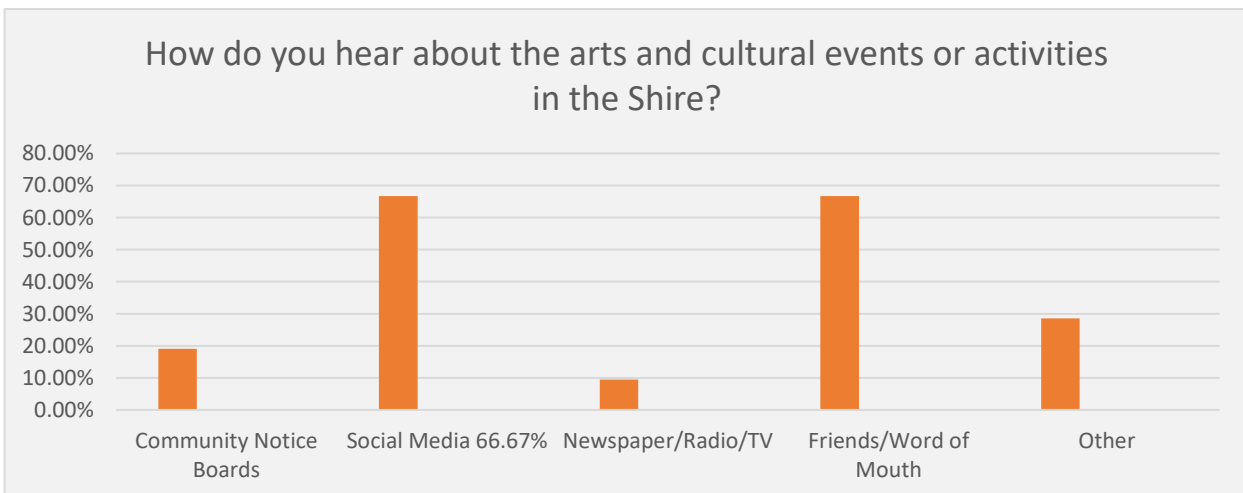


Figure 11: Percentage of online survey preference regarding communication channels

[Have Your Say Presentation and Discussion - 40 Responses](#)

Figure 12 reinforces the findings from the online survey, indicating that social media (40%) and word of mouth (18%) are the primary communication channels, while community notice boards account for 13%. Traditional media outlets, including newspapers, radio, and television, have minimal impact at just 2%. Notably, nearly a third of participants (27%) identified the Council's Inform Newsletter as a key resource for learning about arts and cultural events.

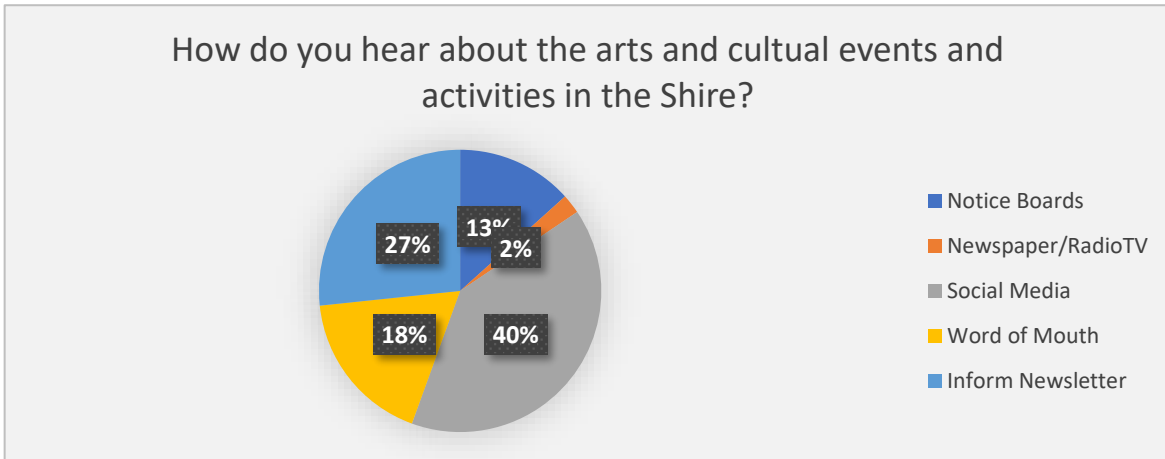


Figure 12: Percentage of respondents involved in face-to-face discussion preference regarding communication channels

[Have Your Say Presentation and Discussion - 15 Responses](#)

Participants were invited to suggest several words that illustrate the significance of arts and culture within the Etheridge community. The responses regarding the importance of arts and culture in the daily experiences of community members are presented in Figure 13.

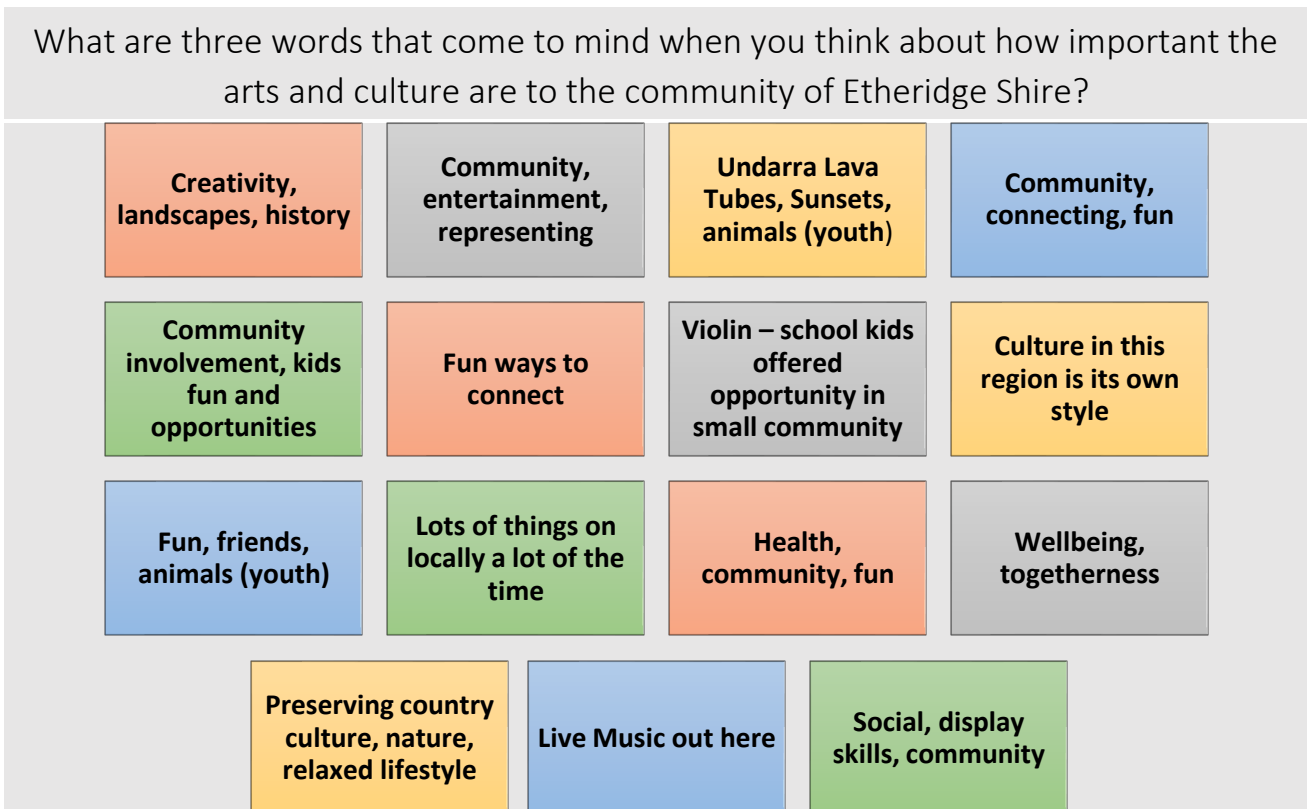


Figure 13: Respondents description of the value of the arts and culture to the community

3.1.3 Data on Council's Role in the Arts and Cultural Development

Online Survey – 19 Responses

Survey results depicted in Figure 14 reflect the ratings for the Council's arts and cultural services. While 21.05% of participants considered the Council's venues and facilities to be poor, a significant 52.63% rated them as good, with 21.05% marking them as very good and 2.26% as excellent. The maintenance of historic sites garnered a good rating from 47.37% of respondents, while 26.32% rated it very good, and another 26.32% deemed it poor. The provision of grants and resources was favourably assessed, with 42.11% rating it very good and an equal percentage rating it good. Accessibility ratings showed a mix, with 42.11% rating it poorly, 36.84% as good, and 5.26% as excellent, while marketing and promotion received comparable evaluations. The greatest dissatisfaction was noted in the diversity of activities available, with approximately 80% of respondents rating this aspect as poor to reasonable.

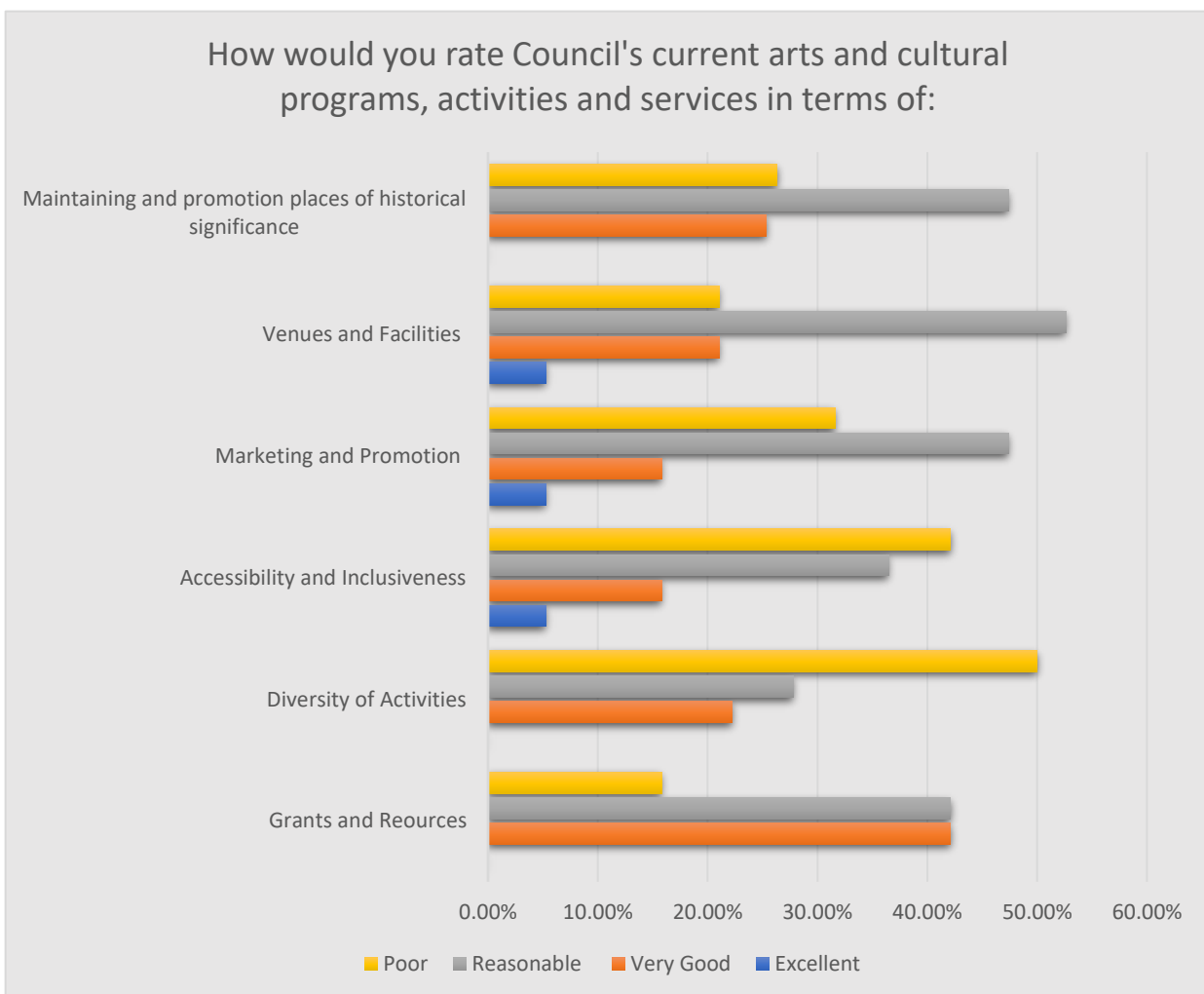


Figure 14: Percentage of online survey respondents' rating of the Council's arts and cultural services

Online Survey – 14 Responses

Survey respondents identified key areas where the Council could improve its support for arts and cultural development. Survey results depicted in Figure 15 emphasise the importance of providing grants and resources for local creative initiatives, along with ensuring that Council's arts and cultural services and facilities are equitable and accessible. Additionally, fostering collaboration with the community and local businesses is considered important. Notably, promoting the region's arts events, organizing community events and festivals, and maintaining the shire's cultural and historical assets were viewed as less critical by the participants.

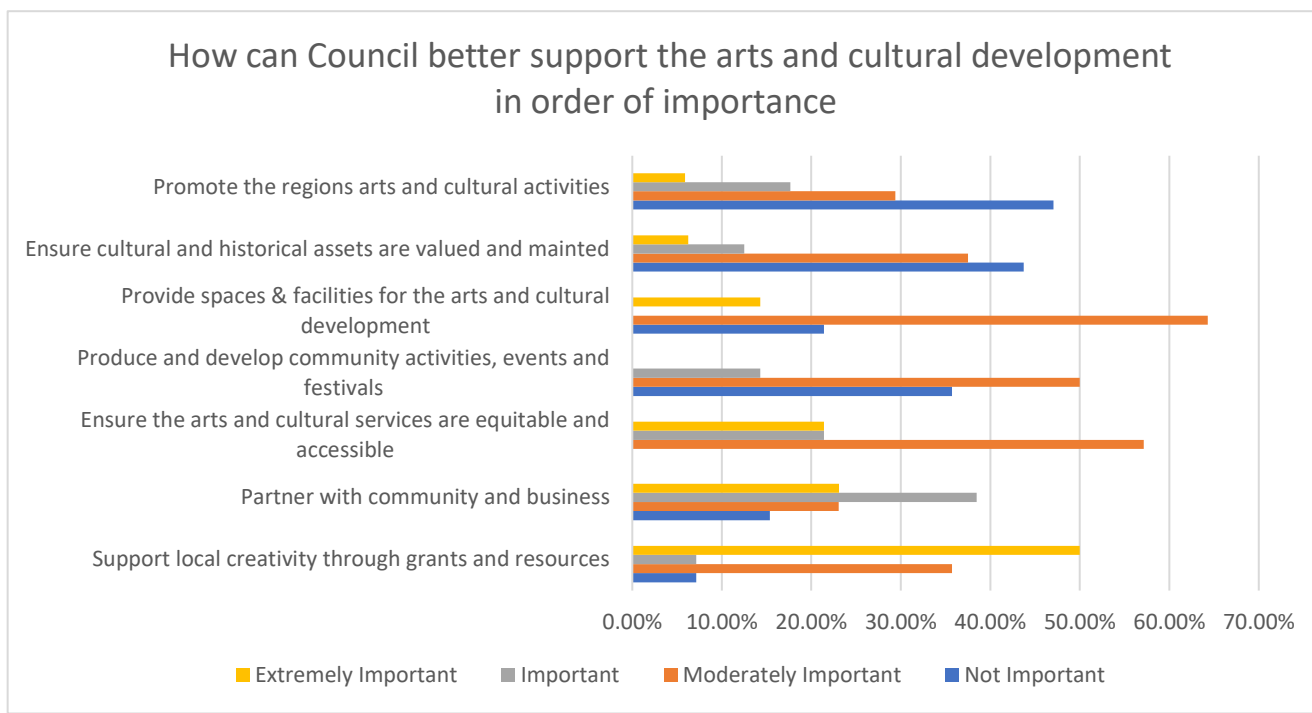


Figure 15: Percentage of online survey respondents rating of how Council can better support the arts and cultural development

Are there any other ways Council can support the arts and culture in Etheridge Shire? - 8 Responses

Make it easy for local people to share their skills with other local people in all communities in the shire
It's a quiet shire especially in wet season, something to do or go to during those times would be good
By providing additional concerts and performances
Encourage communities to unite and support each other
School functions
More events and workshops in towns other than Georgetown
Spread it out to other towns in the shire, not just Georgetown
Council needs to do more workshops and organize more events to bring the community together. The bare minimum (Anzac Day, Australia Day and Community Christmas Party) is simply not enough.

Online Survey – 17 Responses

Figure 16 outlines key priorities for the Shire's arts and cultural development. Nearly 50% of respondents view enhancing grant funding as important, while about 41% do not prioritize it. Many participants emphasize the need for a wider range of workshops, educational programs, and professional development, along with the necessary spaces and facilities. Additionally, promoting the Shire's notable locations and creating self-guided art and history trails are seen as important goals. Approximately 40% see the significance of developing cultural tourism initiatives.

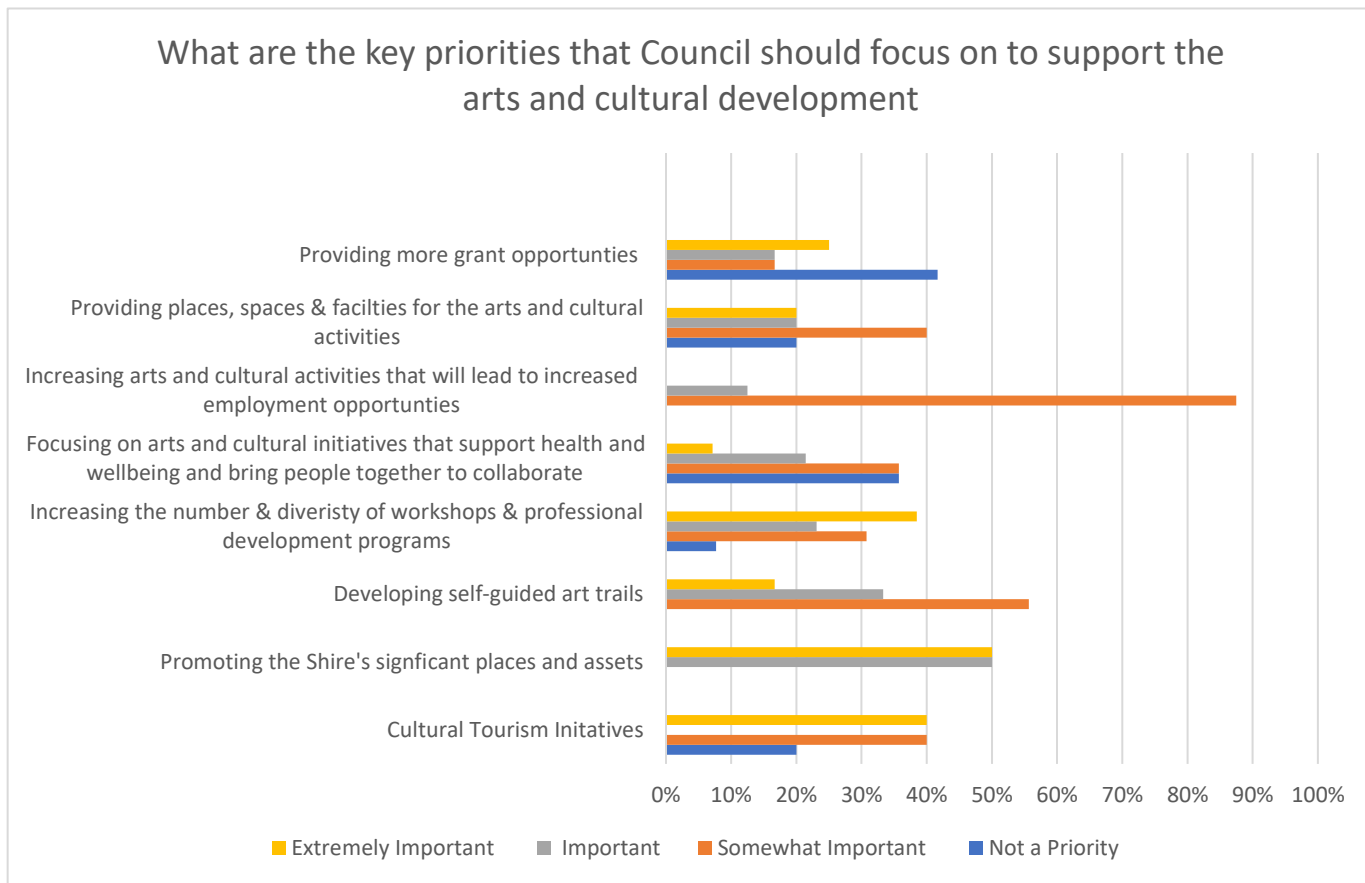


Figure 16: Percentage of online survey respondents rating priorities for the future

Is there anything else you would like to see Council prioritise over the next three years? – 5 Responses

Regular things to do, to entertain year-round
The history of the town done in painting and metal art along walking tracks
More artwork throughout the towns like the kapok in Georgetown
More infrastructure in the smaller towns where events can be held
Community growth

Have Your Say Presentation and Discussion - 12 Responses

Figure 17 supports several conclusions drawn from the online survey, highlighting the top-rated priorities: initiatives that support health and wellbeing and bring people together to collaborate and share ideas; increasing grant funding; expanding the diversity of offerings including the number of workshops and professional development opportunities, and promoting significant local places and heritage assets through the development of arts and history trails and cultural tourism initiatives. In contrast, efforts to promote local arts and cultural activities, ensure accessibility and inclusivity in events, support First Nations artists and projects, and enhance employment opportunities are regarded as lower priorities.

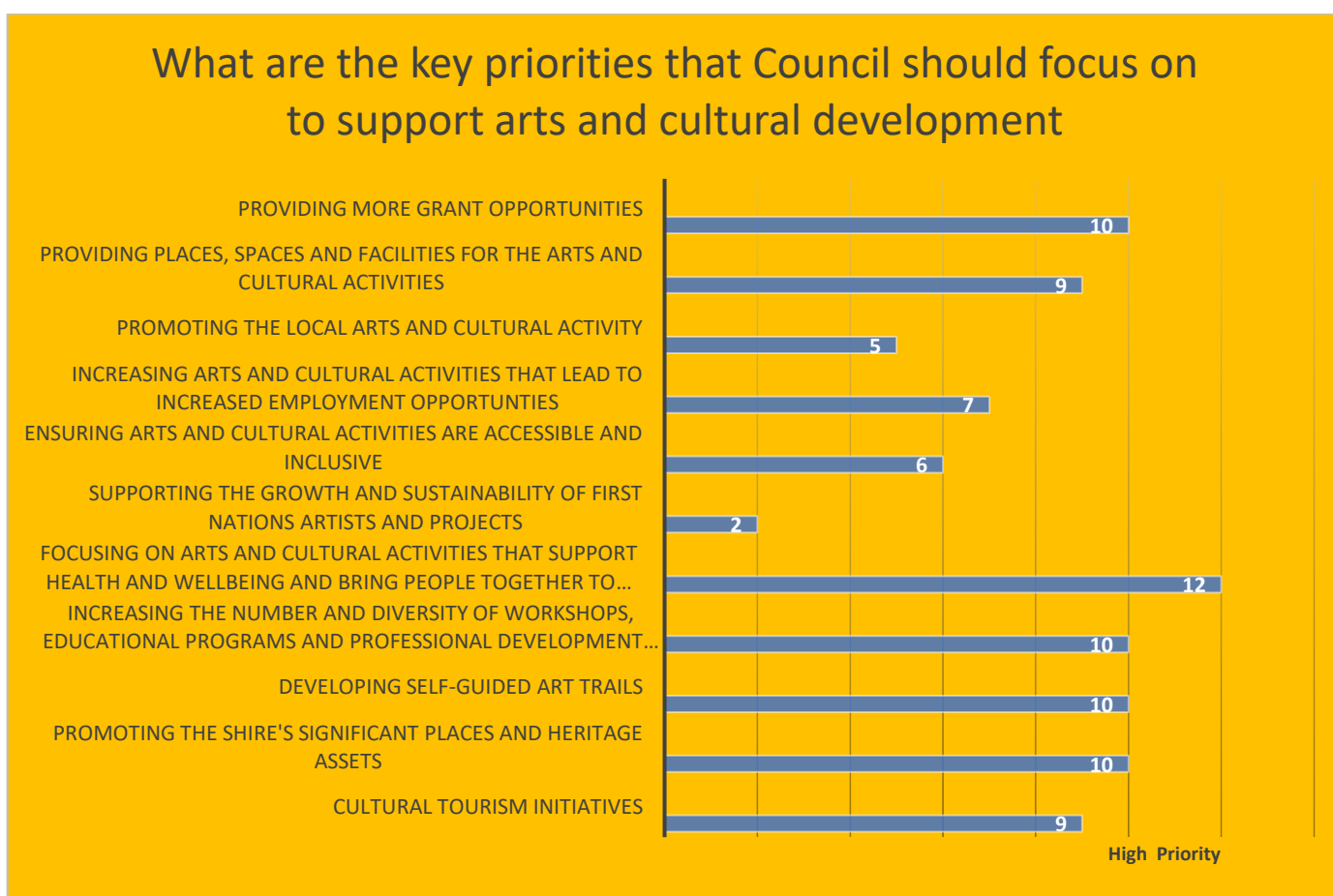


Figure 17: Number of respondents involved in face-to-face discussion rating priorities for the future

Is there anything else you would like to see Council prioritise over the next three years? – 4 Responses

Drawing for nature

Camp drafting clinics, local culture – understanding that locals are proud of their local culture (farming/horses/bush culture) and see events like the Turnout, races, rodeos etc. as their unique culture which should be celebrated.

Making people realise that they are artists/practicing and hobby

Music and murals

Industry professionals to teach new skills (practical skills like sewing)