Supporting creative talent to thrive in Scotland: Navigating a resilient and fair HR landscape for creative industries
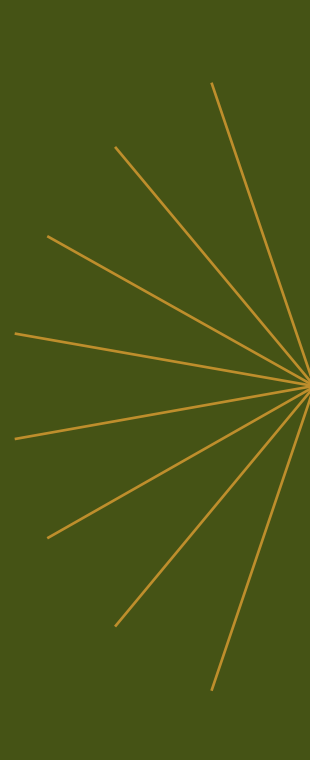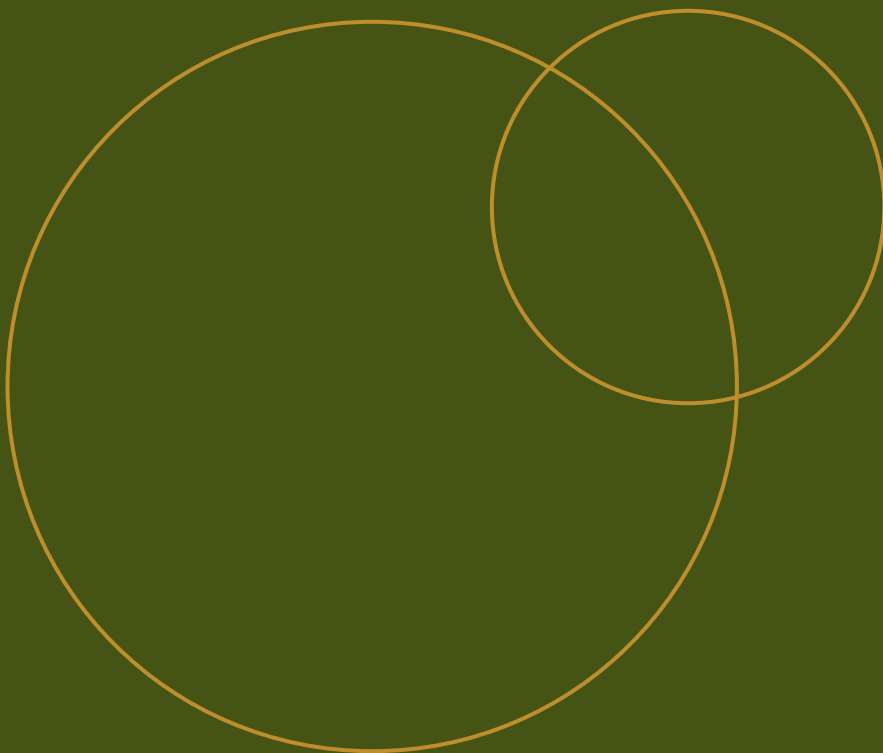
Exploring learning from the 'HR for Creatives' project to improve human resources across creative sectors in Scotland

March 2025

By tialt - there is an alternative

SCVO

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Executive Summary

The HR for Creatives project, led by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) funded and initiated by Creative Scotland, aimed to support 20 arts, screen, and creative industries employers in Scotland. Creative Scotland's 2022 Review of Fair Work showed that specialist HR expertise is often beyond the budgets of employers in the creative industries, which disadvantages implementing the Scottish Government's Fair Work First agenda. In response, Creative Scotland partnered with SCVO on an action research project to explore the support needed for micro and small creative organisations. The 12-month initiative focused on improving HR practices and implementing Fair Work principles across the arts, screen and creative sectors. Tialt was commissioned as the learning and reflection partner for the project. This research summarises the key findings of ongoing conversations throughout the project, and a rapid literature review.

Programme participant profiles

- Participating organisations were primarily micro (fewer than 10 employees) and small-scale (10-50 employees) in recognition of this demographic potentially benefiting the most from the programme.

- The cohort represented diverse geographic locations and artforms, including theatre, visual arts, crafts, dance, and music.

- Approximately 70% of organisations operated with some level of grant funding.

Organisations' Motivations for Participation

- Improvement of HR infrastructure

- Managing freelancers and permanent staff

- Conflict resolution and employee wellbeing

- Fair Work implementation

- Sharing knowledge and building networks

- Organisational growth and sustainability

Strengths of Workforce Structures and HR Practices

Core themes:

- Flexibility in employment arrangements

- Collaboration and innovation

- Creativity and passion driving engagement

- Alignment of organisational and personal values

Workforce Challenges

Core themes:

- Burnout due to high workloads and resource constraints

- Job insecurity and pay disparities, particularly for freelancers

- Inconsistent HR policies across organisations

- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) implementation difficulties

- Reliance on volunteers without formal protections

Fair Work Principles Implementation

Core themes:

- Challenges in maintaining wage equity across staff types

- The inherent insecurity of freelance working and how organisations best manage this

- Inconsistent incorporation of freelancer perspectives in decision-making

- Limited access to professional development opportunities for freelancers

- Informal HR practices hindering consistent application of respect and dignity principles

Recommendations

The report suggests a multi-level approach to improve HR practices in the creative industries:

- Develop transparent pay rate guidelines

- Establish standardised volunteer agreements

- Create peer networks for shared learning

- Implement structured conflict management approaches

- Adopt flexible HR models

- Provide tailored mental health and wellbeing resources

- Establish a Fair Work accountability framework

- Continue to offer capacity building and support for small organisations

- Create a sector-wide digital platform for HR resources

Conclusion

The HR for Creatives project has highlighted both the unique strengths and persistent challenges within HR practice across Scotland's creative industries. While the sector thrives on creativity, flexibility, and passion, it faces significant issues such as burnout, inconsistent HR practices, and job insecurity. The research emphasises the need for collaborative efforts across organisations, funders, and government bodies to address these challenges to continue to foster a fairer, more resilient workforce in the creative industries. These stakeholders should consider how the positive impact of the HR for Creatives project could be scaled yet further.

Contents

Introduction

The HR for Creatives project was an initiative led by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) funded and initiated by Creative Scotland. The project was designed to support 20 arts, screen, and creative industries employers in Scotland, with a focus on improving human resources practices across the creative industries. It emphasised enhancing the implementation of Fair Work principles, which are crucial for equitable employment and sustainable organisational growth.

Over a 12-month period, the project provided tailored HR support to small organisations that often lack in-house HR expertise. It aligns with the Scottish Government's Fair Work First agenda (which targets all employment, not just within the creative industries), aiming to foster legal compliance and move beyond minimum requirements to create better working conditions and environments for employees and freelancers who work in the creative industries. It also recognises that the Fair Work agenda does not include self employed freelancers, and the unique relationship the Creative Industries has with self employed freelancers. The following report aims to explore learning from the HR for Creatives project to improve human resources across the creative industries in Scotland and reflect on the organisational needs of those taking part in the HR for Creatives project.

The shared learning from this project serves as a valuable resource to shed light on common workforce issues and considerations for:

- Creative industry and cultural organisations

- Policymakers

- Sector leaders

Working with an evaluation and reflection partner

Over the course of the project, Tialt acted as research partners, bringing together creative industry organisations to discuss shared challenges, innovative solutions and strategies for implementing HR best practices as part of peer learning sessions. These sessions created a collaborative learning environment, offering participants the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences while learning from others in similar roles and industries.

Furthermore, Tialt conducted an analysis of policy documents and academic literature to contextualise the findings and assess broader sectoral trends (referenced throughout this report and available in appendices). The review covered HR practices such as fair pay, diversity, inclusion, and organisational innovation, offering a robust foundation for evidence-based recommendations. The research presented here is drawn from this research and aims at providing practical insights for organisations seeking to enhance their HR practices, while also informing policy discussions across the sector.

Definitions within Report

Freelancers

For the purposes of this report, "freelancers" refers to individuals working within the creative industries on a self-employed or short-term contractual basis. Freelancers span a wide range of roles, including artists, technicians, producers, and administrators. While the term encompasses a diverse workforce, commonalities often include precarity, lack of employment benefits, and reliance on project-based opportunities. On the positive side, freelancing often offers flexibility, autonomy, and the ability to work across a range of projects, often allowing individuals to pursue their passions and develop a broad skill set. Freelancing practices are heavily influenced by external regulations, such as HMRC's definitions of employment status. We have drawn this definition from the Illustrated Freelancer's Guide (2024).

Cohort Profile and Context

Size and Scope of Work

The participating organisations within HR for Creatives included a mix of micro (fewer than 10 employees) and small-scale organisations (10-50 employees), with no representation from medium/large-sized organisations (50+ employees). Most micro-organisations depend significantly on freelance employees and a small number of permanent employees. Similarly, small-scale organisations also rely on permanent staff throughout the year but continue to engage freelancers frequently for project-specific roles.

Geographic and Artform Spread

The cohort represented a geographically diverse sample, with organisations based in urban centres such as Glasgow and Edinburgh, as well as rural and remote regions, including the Highlands and Islands. Artforms represented include theatre, visual arts, crafts, dance, music, and interdisciplinary practices. The following report does not explore artform and geographic trends, as there was not enough evidence to make claims of correlation (due to the sample size), however, it was noted by one participating organisation: *"It's hard to convince people to move to a rural area for work when the infrastructure just isn't there. We need to work with freelancers and often struggle during projects. We're constantly battling with recruitment and retention."* Further exploration of the unique challenges, and successes, within different art forms and location, are needed beyond this research.

Economic Base

Approximately 70% (14/20) of the organisations operate with some level of grant funding, either through Creative Scotland's Regular Funding Organisation (RFO) programme or project-based grants. The remaining organisations operate primarily on earned income, sponsorship, and individual donations. This economic diversity shaped their approaches to HR, influencing their capacity to implement Fair Work principles.

Overview of why organisations took part in HR for Creatives

Participants in the HR for Creatives project applied to address critical HR challenges and improve team management within their organisations. Their motivations for participating aligned with six key themes:

1. Improvement of HR Infrastructure: Many organisations sought to formalise and improve HR practices, particularly around contracts, policies, and recruitment. A lack of internal expertise or resources to develop robust systems was a common challenge.

> *"We need clear procedures to ensure fairness and compliance, but we don't have the expertise internally."*
>
> *(HR for Creatives Participant)*

2. Managing Freelancers and Permanent Staff: Balancing the needs of freelance and permanent staff presented ongoing difficulties, particularly in ensuring pay equity, consistent contracts, and effective performance management.

> *"There's a challenge in creating policies that are fair for both freelancers and permanent staff. We want to find a balance."*
>
> *(HR for Creatives Participant)*

3. Conflict Resolution and Employee Wellbeing: Workplace conflict and staff wellbeing were key concerns, particularly within small teams facing high workloads. Organisations were keen to develop strategies to manage conflict and promote wellbeing.

> *"We've struggled with workplace conflicts, particularly in our small team. It's becoming an issue we can no longer ignore."*
>
> *(HR for Creatives Participant)*

4. Fair Work Implementation: For Creative Scotland-funded organisations, aligning with Fair Work principles was a significant motivator. Some organisations identified gaps in areas such as pay and job security and sought guidance to address them.

> *"We want to ensure our practices align with Fair Work, especially around pay and job security, but we need guidance."*
>
> *(HR for Creatives Participant)*

5. Sharing Knowledge and Building Networks: Participants valued opportunities to connect with peers, share knowledge, and access HR resources tailored to the creative sector.

> *"Learning from others in the sector is something we're really looking forward to. We don't have the capacity to reinvent the wheel, so shared learning would be invaluable."*
> *(HR for Creatives Participant)*

6. Organisational Growth and Sustainability: Some organisations sought support to establish sustainable HR structures to manage growth and navigate sector challenges.

> *"Our organisation is growing, and we need the right HR structures in place to support that growth sustainably."*
> *(HR for Creatives Participant)*

The reasons why organisations took part in HR for Creatives underscore the creative industries' complex and often informal relationship with HR practices. Organisations expressed a clear desire for more formalised systems, particularly to manage freelancers effectively and ensure Fair Work across all roles. These findings align with broader themes within the academic literature, which highlight the unique challenges and opportunities within the creative industries. The motivations behind organisations' participation in the HR for Creatives project demonstrate a commitment to addressing these challenges and fostering sustainable, equitable workplaces.

What Did Organisations Do During the HR for Creatives Project?

The HR for Creatives project broadly sat across three phases over the twelve months, however, different organisations utilised the expertise of SCVO in bespoke ways. Typically, organisations were invited to share their HR needs and expectations and were then provided with an 'internal review' by SCVO to identify policies and practices that could be supported. The organisations were then provided with support to develop policies and practices, as well as connecting with other organisations through peer support. Throughout the 12-months, organisations were encouraged to support one another to develop knowledge and skills.

Overall, the HR for Creatives project aimed to improve HR resources available to arts, screen, and creative industries organisations. Feedback from participants indicates that the 12-month support made available through the project has been, for some, transformational. As participants highlighted:

> **"We now feel more equipped to handle recruitment and contracts in a fair and structured way."**

> **"The tools provided have helped us address discrepancies between how we treat permanent and freelance staff, which has been a long-standing issue."**

> **"We now feel more connected to other organisations, across sectors, and with HR best practices. I have the confidence to not only create policies but embed them into the organisation."**

The overwhelmingly positive feedback from participating organisations strongly suggests that the creative industries in Scotland could continue to benefit from future iterations of the HR for Creatives project.
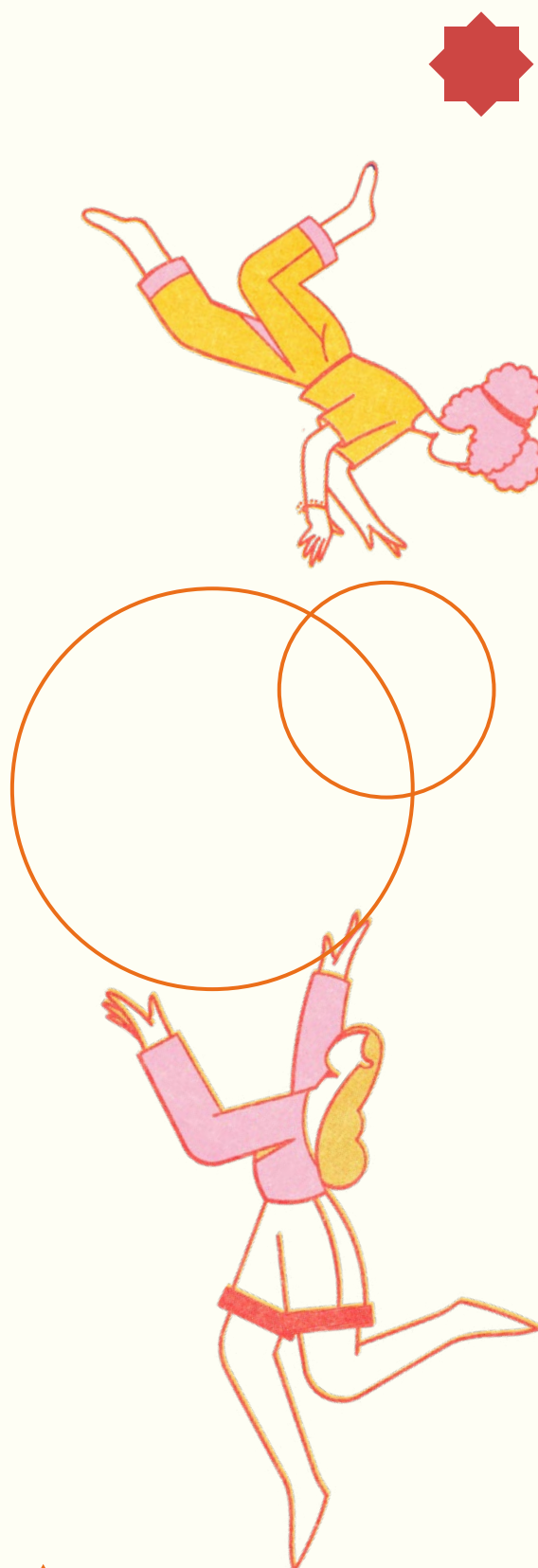
HR Strengths and Weaknesses in the Arts and Creative Industries

The HR for Creatives project and accompanying analysis shed light on the unique workforce structures in Scotland's arts, screen, and creative industries. These sectors employ a mix of permanent staff, freelancers, volunteers, and contractors, leading to both strengths and significant challenges in HR practices. Insights from the participating organisations, alongside literature and documentary analysis, reveal recurring themes and highlight areas for improvement. Organisations that participated in the HR for Creatives project spoke often about Fair Work principles, and as such, a dedicated exploration of these is provided after exploring the broader strengths and weaknesses within HR below.

Strengths of Workforce Structures

The creative industries in Scotland is characterised by a dynamic and adaptive workforce which thrives on collaboration, flexibility, and a shared passion for creative expression. These strengths underpin the resilience of organisations in the sector, enabling them to navigate challenges while fostering innovation and cultural impact. As one participant noted, *"The ability to problem-solve collectively makes us more resilient and creative as an organisation."*

Flexibility

Freelancers and contract workers benefit from flexible arrangements, allowing them to take on multiple projects and gain diverse experiences. This adaptability enables organisations to respond to evolving creative demands.

> *"The ability to work on varied projects across different organisations is one of the key reasons I chose freelance work."*
> *(HR for Creatives Participant)*

> *"The use of freelancers allows us to adapt to project demands while accessing specialised skills, which is essential,"*
> *(HR for Creatives Participant)*

Collaboration and innovation

Many organisations in the creative industries are built on a foundation of collaboration. This encourages the development of creative solutions and innovative practices, allowing businesses to adapt rapidly to changing circumstances. Peer learning sessions highlighted how collective problem-solving leads to greater organisational resilience and creativity.

"The ability to problem-solve collectively makes us more resilient and creative as an organisation."
(HR for Creatives Participant)

Several participants commented that the HR resources and peer support network created through the HR for Creatives project were invaluable. They reported an increase in confidence when dealing with HR issues, knowing they had templates and best practices to guide them. One participant noted, **"We now feel more equipped to handle recruitment and contracts in a fair and structured way."** Collaborative practices are beneficial to the creative industries' HR needs.

Creativity and Passion

Passion for creative work drives individuals in this sector, fostering high levels of engagement and innovation. This commitment often results in exceptional outputs and alignment with organisational values.

"Despite the challenges, my passion for the arts drives me to continue, and I believe it's this passion that keeps the sector alive."
(HR for Creatives Participant)

Aligned Values

Many organisations embed their values into their work, using creative practices to advocate for social change. Employees and freelancers often find satisfaction in contributing to these broader societal goals.

"We wouldn't do what we do if we didn't think it was making a difference to something... I believe for me, and the people at work being able to live our values, not always successfully, but mostly through work is why we do what we do"

(HR for Creatives Participant)
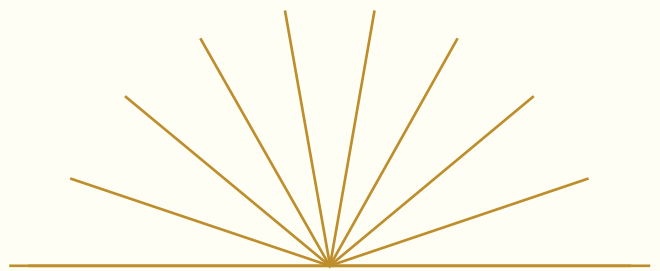
Workforce Challenges

A number of challenges were identified by the participating HR for Creatives organisations. As one participant noted:

"feeling that the odds are stacked against the sector in many ways – a lack of understanding or value of creativity at policy level, which only then trickles down to attitudes locally, in education, in the structures we work within. I find it harder to feel hopeful as a result. For the organisation feeling that there's a lack of vision and collaboration, locally."

However, discussions during peer sessions highlighted a collective urge for change and creative insightful ways of developing mechanisms to tackle workforce challenges. Some of the challenges identified were:

Burnout

Burnout remains pervasive across the creative industries due to high workloads, resource constraints, and relentless expectations. Whilst the passion of employees is an industry strength (as identified previously), it can also result in over-work. Both permanent employees and freelancers report chronic exhaustion.

"I've never had a position in the arts where I haven't experienced burnout... Burnout is the norm in the arts for everyone, and something has to seriously change."
(HR for Creatives Participant)

"The sheer volume of things they need to be considering even for a tiny conversation ... systemic challenges are pushing people to take on more." (HR for Creatives Participant)

Wellbeing programs, while present in some organisations, are often superficial and fail to address root causes like excessive workloads or job insecurity. Casacuberta and Gandelman (2011) stress that precarious working conditions further exacerbate mental health challenges, necessitating systemic reforms. As has been noted in other research, many freelancers do not choose to be freelance, but instead are forced into freelance positions due to a scarcity of opportunities within the creative industries (Arts Council England, 2024).

Job Insecurity and Pay Disparities

Freelancers face significant financial instability due to project-based employment and fluctuating income (FMTW 2024). They often lack benefits such as healthcare, pensions, and paid leave, creating disparities between them and permanent staff.

Creative Scotland's Freelancers Guide (2024) highlights the challenges posed by inconsistent pay and the inequities that alienate freelance workers. Participating organisations highlighted a shared desire to secure better job security for freelancers they worked with, but as one organisation highlighted:

> *"While we are committed to creating secure, stable jobs for both our permanent employees and freelancers, the current instability in the sector makes this incredibly challenging. Funding uncertainties and the project-based nature of our work mean we are often unable to offer long-term contracts or guarantee consistent employment. We want to support everyone we work with, but the lack of financial stability in the sector limits what we can do."*

Inconsistent HR Policies

Many organisations lack unified HR policies, creating confusion and inequities among staff. This fragmentation particularly affects freelancers, who often feel excluded from organisational support.

> *"We don't have a single HR policy that applies across the board, and that creates confusion and inequality among our staff."*
> *(HR for Creatives Participant)*

Moreover, embedding policies into daily practice remains a significant challenge. Even when policies exist, organisations often struggle to implement them effectively, reducing their impact.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

EDI surfaced as a critical area requiring improvement. While many organisations value diversity, formalised approaches and support mechanisms are often absent. Initiatives are typically focused on entry-level positions (Wreyford, O'Brien and Dent, 2021), limiting progression opportunities for marginalised groups.

> *"We want to open up opportunities but have been told... 'where do I go?' by participants, and we struggle to implement change root to stem, outside of entry-level opportunities"*
> *(HR for Creatives Participant)*

As the Living Wage Foundation (2022) notes, low pay and job insecurity disproportionately affect women and marginalised communities, perpetuating inequality across the sector. Structural change is required to promote inclusivity at all employment levels.

Reliance on Volunteers

Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting organisations, particularly in rural or community settings (as one HR for Creatives participant noted *"we were volunteer run previously, and the opportunities to volunteer are embedded into the organisation"*). When managed well, volunteer contributions can have a positive impact. However, a lack of formal protections and representation can make volunteers vulnerable to exploitation (Dima, 2015). The Fair Work and Volunteer Charter (2023) cautions that inconsistencies in managing volunteers can undermine their contributions, particularly when they perform tasks typically assigned to paid workers.

Implementing Fair Work Principles

Employers participating in the HR for Creatives project expressed a shared commitment to Fair Work principles: fair pay, job security, employee voice, professional development, and respect, but acknowledged some challenges in fully realising these ideals.

As one HR for Creatives participant noted: *"Fair Work feels like it is about large organisations … the policy is made for organisations with trade unions, which does not reflect the reality for small arts organisations"* another organisation wrote *"Fair Work principles feel aspirational, but without monitoring, they're more of a guideline than a requirement. Smaller organisations especially need support to ensure they're meeting these standards."*

The following exploration reflects insights from the HR for Creatives cohort and the unique challenges and successes faced by the creative industries in Scotland to meet Fair Work standards.

Fair Pay

Employers highlighted difficulties in maintaining wage equity across permanent staff and freelancers, particularly given limited budgets. Many noted that, while paying the Real Living Wage is a requirement for public funding, it does not align with the "minimum standard of living" defined as £28,000 per year by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023). As one participant wrote *"We struggle to align pay equity across staff types because our budget is stretched. If there were more oversight or a clearer framework, it might help us prioritise these changes."*

Job Security

Freelancers remain particularly vulnerable to job instability due to the project-based nature of the creative industries. Employers are exploring innovative contract models to provide more stability while maintaining flexibility, but these remain in early stages of development. As one participant noted: *"Freelancers' contracts often fall through cracks in accountability. Organisations like ours don't always know how to align project-based contracts with job security principles."*

Employee Voice

While smaller organisations often foster open communication due to their scale, incorporating freelancer perspectives into decision-making processes remains inconsistent. Transient roles make it challenging to establish formal channels for freelance input. As one participant wrote:

"It's not only that it can be hard to provide the space needed for freelancers to share their voice in short time frames, but we want to ensure they feel safe to raise issues or concerns with us directly... we know freelancers often feel scarcity of jobs, how can I make sure they know that
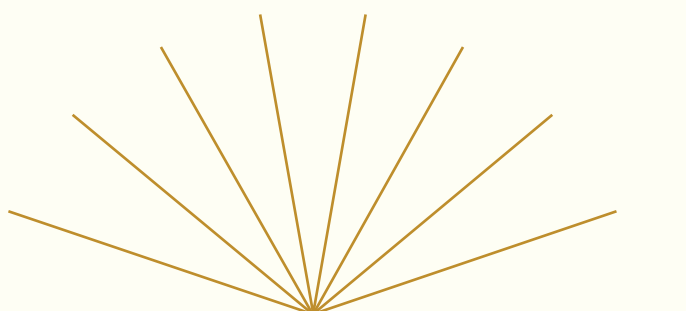
by sharing they aren't jeopardising future roles?... that's a sector-wide responsibility... a bad experience at one organisation may make a freelancer less likely to engage in critical feedback in another".

Another organisation wrote:

"I would like to learn more about how large organisations do this through unions, and what the differences are between how my two colleagues and I share our voice, and how employees of large organisations do."

Professional Development

Permanent employees are more likely to access development opportunities than freelancers, who often lack access to training or mentorship programs. Employers acknowledged the importance of extending these benefits to freelance workers but cited financial and operational constraints as barriers. However, many organisations taking part in the HR for Creatives project highlighted their commitment to providing freelancers with equal opportunities in training and development.

Respect and Dignity

Participants expressed a commitment to creating respectful workplaces but acknowledged that informal HR practices sometimes hinder the consistent application of these principles. Formalising policies and ensuring they are embedded into daily practice is seen as a necessary step to foster inclusivity and respect across all staff types.

"There's a lot of overlap between personal and professional, especially with freelancers, and that makes it harder to separate emotions when conflicts arise."
(HR for Creatives Participant)
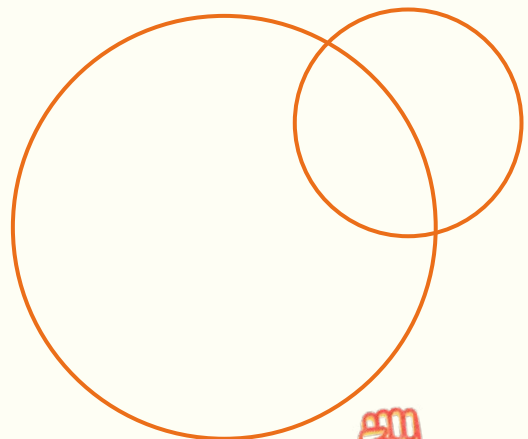
Conclusion

The HR for Creatives project has provided valuable insights into the distinct challenges and opportunities within Scotland's arts, screen, and creative industries. This sector thrives on creativity, flexibility, and passion but faces persistent issues, including burnout, inconsistent HR practices, pay inequities, and job insecurity. The challenges are particularly acute for smaller organisations without formal HR structures and freelancers navigating precarious work environments.

Supporting HR Improvements Across the Creative Industries: Multi-Level Actions for Change

The insights from this research highlight a broad spectrum of opportunities to improve HR practices in the creative industries, from practical, organisation-level changes to larger systemic efforts supported by funders and government. Recognising that change requires time and collaborative effort, this section offers a framework of actions that can be undertaken at various levels. Even small organisational shifts can lead to significant improvements in HR practices, as reflected by one HR for Creatives participant: *"Change may not be embedded yet ... but clear communication and active listening have been transformative for staff security and morale."*

SCVO's suite of tools, designed to support both the creative industries and other charities, offers practical resources to aid organisations in making these changes. While systemic reforms are vital, many actions can start at an organisational level, contributing to meaningful progress.

Pay Rate Transparency

To address disparities and tensions in pay models, organisations, funders, and government bodies can work collaboratively to establish comprehensive pay guidelines. These guidelines should reflect sector-specific nuances, cost-of-living increases, and best practices. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that some unions have already undertaken work to establish standardised pay rates in some sectors, and this remains the the most appropriate route for addressing these issues. The challenge lies in the fact that effective unionisation does not exist across all areas of practice, leading to gaps where no clear pay rates are established. The Culture Fair Work Task Force, made up of representatives across the creative industries, may offer insights into approaches to developing guidelines when it concludes in June 2025.

Moreover, fee rates for self-employed contractors need to account for the differences in this way of working. Unlike salaried workers, these workers need to cover statutory benefits such as sick pay, annual leave, or pension contributions themselves, meaning their rates need to be higher to compensate for these additional costs. Any guidance on pay models should not only reference union recommendations but also ensure that it fairly reflects the different conditions for self-employed workers and the precarious conditions many freelancers are required to navigate.

As one participant noted, *"Some third-sector partners see Scottish Artist Union day rates as too high ... creating tensions between organisations with differing pay models."* Providing transparent rate cards and encouraging documented conversations about pay expectations can reduce misunderstandings, with another participant emphasising, *"Transparency in freelance pay, like rate cards and documented conversations, helps set clear expectations and reduces misunderstandings."*

Volunteer Agreements

The development of standardised volunteer agreements, aligned with Fair Work principles, can ensure consistency and clarify roles across organisations. Collaborating with Volunteer Scotland and leveraging the Scottish Government's volunteering framework can help achieve this.

One participant highlighted the importance of encompassing all roles within organisational policies: *"Staff handbook only applies to employed people, but we have 40 freelance staff ... we need policies encompassing all roles, paid or volunteer."*

Peer Networks for Shared Learning

Peer networks provide a valuable platform for organisations to share resources, learn from one another, and collaboratively address HR challenges. Such networks empower smaller organisations to adopt successful practices from their peers. As one participant noted *"It was refreshing to see that we weren't alone in our HR struggles. Hearing how other arts organisations managed similar issues gave us a sense of direction, and we were able to adapt some of those solutions for our context."*

Conflict Management Approaches

Structured conflict resolution training and guidelines are essential for managing disputes in the creative industries, especially in small teams with mixed workforces. Flexible, context-specific approaches can be highly effective, as noted by a participant: *"For small organisations like us, informal processes often work better before formal grievance procedures but balancing personal and professional boundaries remains challenging."* Another participant noted *"There's a lot of overlap between personal and professional, especially with freelancers, and that makes it harder to separate emotions when conflicts arise."* Conflict management approaches must be situationally responsive and recognise the emotional toll of taking part in difficult conversations.

Flexible HR Models

Adopting adaptable HR frameworks allows organisations to address the needs of both freelance and permanent staff while supporting job security and benefits. SCVO's digital HR resource library provides templates and guidance to help organisations implement such models effectively.

Promoting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

A centralised EDI toolkit could assist organisations in embedding inclusive practices in hiring, onboarding, and employee support. This toolkit should also address structural barriers that hinder diversity in leadership and career progression for underrepresented groups (Preston 2023).

Mental Health and Wellbeing Resources

Tailored mental health resources can address burnout and stress within the sector, particularly for freelancers who may lack consistent organisational support. Sector-specific programs are essential to fostering a healthier workforce.

Accountability and Fair Work Compliance

Establishing a Fair Work accountability framework can help organisations ensure fair and transparent practices for their workers, particularly in areas such as pay equity, job security, and employee voice. However, to be effective, this framework must be developed collaboratively with the freelancers and employees it impacts, embedding principles of effective voice and transparent communication. By co-designing accountability measures with workers, organisations can ensure that the framework reflects lived experiences, addresses sector-specific challenges, and fosters a culture of trust and fairness. Incorporating practical tools and shared decision-making processes will help align organisational policies with Fair Work standards in a sustainable and meaningful way.

Capacity Building and Support for Small Organisations

Training sessions on HR fundamentals - covering topics like contract management, benefits administration, and policy development - can empower smaller organisations to implement effective HR practices. These efforts can be supported by SCVO's tools and training resources.

Furthermore, the creation of a sector-wide digital platform, offering templates, case studies, and HR tools, would provide ongoing support for organisations. SCVO's new digital resource library represents a critical step in this direction.

Appendices

Methodology for the HR for Creatives research

This research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining techniques to gather comprehensive insights into the HR practices of arts, screen, and creative industries organisations. The methodology involved the following steps:

1. Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including permanent staff, and contract workers from some of the 20 participant organisations. These interviews provided qualitative data on personal experiences with workforce management, HR practices, and the implementation of Fair Work principles. Interview questions were designed to explore challenges such as job security, pay gaps, and burnout, while also identifying successful HR approaches within the organisations. Interviews were semi-structured, allowing for both guided questions and open discussion to uncover deeper insights.

2. Literature Review

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to assess existing academic and industry research related to HR management in the arts, screen, and creative sectors. This review examined issues such as the impact of freelance employment, organisational HR practices, and the broader Fair Work agenda in Scotland. Key reports and papers from Creative Scotland's research on Fair Work, as well as national and global studies, were analysed to contextualise the findings from the primary research.

3. Peer Learning Sessions

Four peer learning sessions were conducted with the participating organisations. These sessions facilitated collaborative learning, allowing organisations to share their experiences and challenges regarding HR practices, recruitment, and managing freelance staff. The sessions were structured to promote mutual learning and exchange of best practices. Observations from these sessions were used to identify common themes, strengths, and weaknesses in workforce management.

4. Documentary and Policy Review

A detailed document and policy review was conducted to analyse HR policies and procedures within the participating organisations. The review covered contracts, recruitment guidelines, pay structures, and diversity policies. Publicly available sector policies were also examined to identify gaps between current practices and Fair Work standards.

The document analysis helped evaluate the extent to which organisations were adhering to Fair Work principles and highlighted areas where improvements could be made.

5. Surveys

Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered through surveys distributed to the participant organisations. The results were analysed to identify patterns and trends across HR concerns within the organisations.

This methodology provided a holistic understanding of the HR challenges faced by arts, screen, and creative industries, while also offering insights into effective solutions and best practices.

Literature Reviews

There is limited literature on the impact of HR and HR management and systems within the creative industries. However, twelve peer-reviewed (academic) pieces of literature have been found which may support and provide insights into the landscape of the work being undertaken within the HR for Creatives projects. Furthermore, it may provide some guidance on approaches and methodologies for organisations which may prove useful.

The analysis of literature highlights several pertinent themes within HR for the creative industries, including but not limited to: employment insecurity, poor working conditions and wages; dominance of small and medium-sized organisations; and a lack of HR knowledge and skills within the sector. The analysis also highlights key positives of the sector, including but not limited to: passion and commitment; industry networks; and the potential for effective HR practices to contribute towards an effective sector.

The below highlights some key learning and reflections from peer-reviewed literature, to further inform the HR for Creatives project. It is broadly broken down into key areas: employment insecurity; organisational management; and strategic human resources management.

Employment Insecurity

The nature of work and employment in the arts is often project-based and casualised, leading to job insecurity and multiple job holding. This is obviously crucial to reflect on, as the HR practices of organisations must take into account the unique nature of the arts sector, meaning drawing from other sectors can be complicated or is limited. The nature of work in the arts creates financial instability for performers, managers, and administrators (Opara et. al. 2019). Low wages and poor working conditions are prevalent in the arts sector. Long hours, heavy workloads, and the expectation of unpaid work contribute to the perception of low wages. This situation is exacerbated by the assumption that people should be willing to work extra hours for no pay due to their passion for the arts (Opara et. al. 2019).

The performing arts industry is dominated by small- and medium-sized organisations (SMEs), which face resource limitations and high levels of casualization. Limited resources result in low income, lack of training, poor working conditions, and limited opportunities for career development (Opara et. al. 2019). Most small performing arts companies rely on government funding, which is often competitive and short-term. This reliance on short-term funding models hampers long-term HR planning and innovation, leading to instability for organisations and precarious employment for workers (Opara et. al. 2019).

These challenges impact not only performers but also managers and administrators in the performing arts sector. The passion and commitment of the workforce are both a strength and a weakness, as they contribute to the acceptance of long hours and unpaid work but also undermine bargaining power and contribute to poorer wages and conditions (Opara et. al. 2019; Casacuberta and Gandelman 2011).

It is important to note that many of these challenges cannot be solved at the organisational level alone and require industry and government responses. Government policy makers need to focus on the sustainability of funding models and consider the detrimental impact of precarious employment in the performing arts sector. Industry players can support the growth of networks that provide training, development, and career opportunities for organisations and individuals (Opara et. al. 2019).

The employment relationships in arts and culture are characterised by several key factors. According to the research papers, cultural workers in the arts and culture sector often have fragmented and unpredictable

employment patterns (Liemt 2014). They may experience underemployment and work fewer hours than they would like to. Many cultural workers are self-employed or engage in freelance work. They may also have secondary jobs to supplement their income (Liemt 2014; Ellmeir 2011).

The employment patterns in arts and culture often differ from traditional full-time employment relationships. Cultural workers may have a combination of employment and self-employment, and they frequently have what is known as "portfolio careers" (Liemt 2014). This means they mix different types of employment status, often due to the nature of their work and the need to take on various projects (Liemt 2014).

The research also highlights the high level of commitment and drive among cultural workers (Liemt 2014). They tend to have above-average motivation and persistence in their work (Liemt 2014). However, despite their dedication, cultural workers often earn modest incomes compared to similarly educated individuals in other sectors (Liemt 2014). They may face challenges in terms of income security and financial stability (Opara et. al. 2019).

The employment relationships in arts and culture are influenced by various factors, including technological, business, and financial changes (Liemt 2014). The literature notes that the arts and culture industry has experienced significant change due to information and communications technology (Liemt 2014). Additionally, government support and funding play a crucial role in the arts and culture sector (Liemt 2014). Changes in government policies and budget cuts can have a direct impact on employment and working conditions in the industry (Liemt 2014).

Overall, the employment relationships in arts and culture are characterised by a high level of commitment, fragmented employment patterns, and often modest incomes. The sector has a significant presence of self-employed and freelance workers, and it is influenced by various external factors such as government policies and technological advancements.

Organisational Management

The following section on organisational management in arts organisations explores the challenges faced by these organisations and the need for alternative methods of management. It highlights the dual leadership structure commonly found in non-profit performing arts organisations, which often leads to internal tension among managers and staff and hinders strategic decision-making and planning (Opara et. al. 2019).

The section also emphasises the importance of evaluating the role of the artistic director, which has traditionally been separated from administrative duties. Understanding the aesthetic requirements of non-profit performing arts organisations is crucial for effective management.

The literature suggests that performing arts organisations should look to alternative methods of organisational management to effectively manage internal complexities and adapt to external challenges. It mentions models drawn from the for-profit, public, and creative sectors that could be applied to non-profit performing arts organisations (Opara et. al. 2019).

The literature also discusses the economic climate and resource concerns faced by non-profit performing arts organisations. It highlights the "cost disease" of growing financial pressures and the widening gap between income and expenses, which often leads to financial strain and reliance on government subsidies or increased ticket prices (Opara et. al. 2019).

Overall, the section highlights the need for non-profit performing arts organisations to re-evaluate their organisational management models and adapt to the changing landscape in order to sustain the industry (Opara et. al. 2019).

Strategic human resources management

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) refers to the alignment of HR practices with the overall strategic goals and objectives of an organisation. It involves the systematic design, implementation, and evaluation of HR policies and practices to enhance organisational performance and achieve a competitive advantage (Saleem and Adeel 2016). SHRM recognizes that employees are valuable assets and that their skills, attitudes, and behaviours can be shaped and influenced to achieve organisational goals (Saleem and Adeel 2016).

Employee creativity is a crucial factor for organisations seeking to create happy employees. Creativity allows organisations to respond more efficiently to changing environments and produce innovative outputs (Saleem and Adeel 2016). It is heavily dependent on an individual's knowledge base and the knowledge processes within an organisation (Saleem and Adeel 2016). Therefore, understanding the relationship between SHRM practices and employee creativity is essential for organisations aiming to foster a creative work environment (Saleem and Adeel 2016). This is obviously crucial for arts and creative industries organisations.

The study on Strategic Human Resource Management and Employee Creativity explores this relationship by examining the impact of SHRM practices on employee creativity. The researchers collected data from 382 employees and their supervisors working at the Ministry of Migration and Displacement in Baghdad, Iraq (Saleem and Adeel 2016). They built their theoretical framework on employee-organisational relationship theories, specifically organisational support theory and leadership theory (Saleem and Adeel 2016).

The findings of the literature indicate that SHRM practices directly or indirectly affect employees' potential to produce creative ideas. SHRM practices can influence creativity through knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing, and knowledge application (Saleem and Adeel 2016). The study also highlights the role of leadership styles in moderating the relationship between SHRM practices and employee creativity (Saleem and Adeel 2016). Transactional and transformational leadership styles were found to have different effects on the relationship (Saleem and Adeel 2016).

The literature provides several theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it contributes to the understanding of the benefits of SHRM practices for individual employee creativity (Saleem and Adeel 2016). It also sheds light on the mediating role of knowledge management capacity between SHRM practices and employee creativity (Saleem and Adeel 2016). Additionally, the study explores the moderating role of leadership styles in this relationship (Saleem and Adeel 2016).

Practically, the literature suggests that organisations can foster employee creativity by implementing effective SHRM practices that promote knowledge acquisition, sharing, and application (Saleem and Adeel 2016). However, the literature also emphasises the importance of leadership style, as it can either enhance or hinder the positive effects of SHRM practices on creativity (Saleem and Adeel 2016). Therefore, organisations should consider the role of leadership in fostering a creative work environment.

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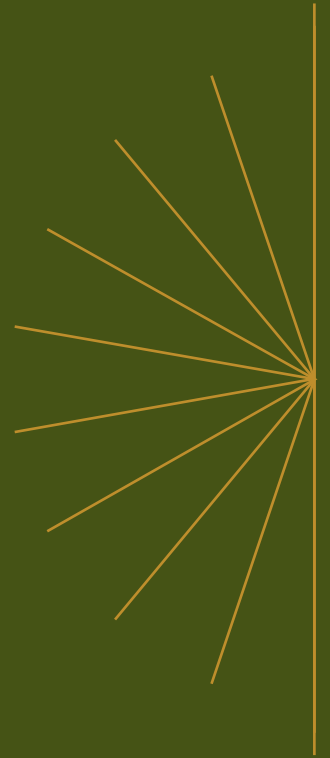
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