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Covid-19 Freelancer Fund Analysis of Administrative Data: Executive Summary

Introduction

The Freelancer Fund operated as part of three funding rounds and was delivered as part of the wider Cultural Recovery Fund to provide financial support to organisations and individuals whose work had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. On a first come first served basis, individuals working as a freelancer in the arts, creative industries, arts and heritage events and culture and heritage sectors, alongside other eligibility criteria, were awarded a grant of a one-off payment of £2,500. This was to help with immediate financial challenges and prevent collapse covering the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. Local authorities delivered the fund on behalf of the Welsh Government and were responsible for providing individuals with the application form, checking the eligibility of applications and for the processing and distribution of payments to successful applicants.

The purpose of this summary is to share the key findings from an initial analysis of administrative data from the first round of the Freelancer Fund that was delivered in three funding phases. This analysis does not include the additional top up funding that was awarded as a further payment of £2,500 to some, but not all, applicants from phases one to three. This is to avoid double counting and therefore the figures are not representative of the total amount of funding spent on financial support for freelancers. The figures for the total number of grants and overall amount allocated to freelancers, inclusive of the top-up funding, can be found in Appendix A. A full written report on the analysis will follow, which will form part of a wider evaluation being undertaken on the first round of the Cultural Recovery Fund as a whole.

This report provides an analysis of the demographic characteristics of freelancers who received financial support from the Freelancer Fund and to examine information that was provided about applicants' area of work.

Demographic data, in addition to information on applicants' area of work and impacts of the pandemic on freelance work activity, was requested from the 22 local authorities in Wales. This was based on information collected from the grant application forms. However, datasets were received in different formats with some fields incomplete and large gaps present where no data was provided by some of the local authorities.

The categorisation of the applicants' area of work to the relevant subsectors has been based on the researcher's subjective assessment of the data provided. Overall, 12% of applicants did not provide information on the main sector they work in. Some data fields were incomplete so the count does not always total the total number of funding awards that were distributed overall.

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Key Findings

Local Authorities

Table 1: Number of grants and amount awarded by local authority for phases 1-3 of the Freelancer Fund

Local Authority	Number of grants awarded	% of total grants awarded	Amount awarded (£)
Isle of Anglesey	76	2.2%	£190,000
Gwynedd	220	6.4%	£550,000
Conwy	142	4.1%	£355,000
Denbighshire	102	3.0%	£255,000
Flintshire	90	2.6%	£225,000
Wrexham	74	2.2%	£185,000
Powys	147	4.3%	£367,500
Ceredigion	102	3.0%	£255,000
Pembrokeshire	125	3.6%	£312,500
Carmarthenshire	174	5.1%	£435,000
Swansea	229	6.7%	£572,500
Neath Port Talbot	98	2.9%	£245,000
Bridgend	104	3.0%	£260,000
The Vale of Glamorgan	232	6.8%	£580,000
Cardiff	791	23.1%	£1,977,500
Rhondda Cynon Taff	184	5.4%	£460,000
Merthyr Tydfil	29	0.8%	£72,500
Caerphilly	144	4.2%	£360,000
Blaenau Gwent	75	2.2%	£187,500
Torfaen	64	1.9%	£160,000
Monmouthshire	93	2.7%	£232,500
Newport	130	3.8%	£325,000
Total	3425	100.0%	£8,562,500

*Amount awarded based on the number of grants distributed in each local authority multiplied by the £2,500 one off payments awarded to individuals.

- In total, 3,425 freelancers were supported by the freelancer fund with the total grants that were awarded amounting to just over £8.5 million.
- Cardiff awarded just under a quarter (23%) of the total grants, with The Vale of Glamorgan and Swansea awarding the next greatest amounts, totalling £580,000 and £572,000, respectively.
- Merthyr Tydfil and Torfaen distributed the fewest number of grants, supporting 29 and 64 individuals.

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- Table 1 represents the first three phases of the fund only. The overall figures that include the data for the top-up funding awards that were distributed as a fourth phase of the fund are outlined in Appendix A.

Gender

- Out of the 3,416 responses, 57% of applicants who received a grant were male and 42% were female. 1% preferred not to say.
- It is unknown what percentage of individuals who applied for funding in the first instance were male or female.

Age

- 3,280 applicants (96%) reported their age, with most individuals (69%) falling within the 25-49 years age bracket. Around a quarter (23%) of applicants were aged 50-64 years old, 5% aged between 16 and 24, and 2% aged over 65 years.
- No aged 65+ category was given to applicants from one local authority so it is assumed there were no individuals who received funding in this age bracket.
- One local authority did not collect data on applicants' age, largely accounting for the 4% of applicants where age was not reported.

Ethnicity

- A total of 111 successful applicants (3%) considered themselves to be Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, 2% preferred not to say and 17 applicants did not complete this field. The remaining 95% did not consider themselves to be from an ethnic minority background.

Disability

- Of the 3,407 responses to the question asking whether individuals considered themselves to be disabled, 149 applicants (4%) reported to be disabled and 2% preferred not to say. The remaining 93% of applicants did not consider themselves to be disabled.

Welsh Language

- Just over a quarter (27%) of freelancers who received funding reported being a Welsh speaker, with 69% not speaking Welsh and 4% who preferred not to say.

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Subsector

Table 2: Number of grants and amount awarded by subsector for phases 1-3 of the Freelancer Fund

Subsector	Number of successful applicants	% of total successful applicants	Amount awarded (£)
Design	42	1.2%	£105,000
Entertainment	136	4.0%	£340,000
Events	208	6.1%	£520,000
Film, TV and Radio	417	12.2%	£1,042,500
Museums, Libraries, Galleries and Heritage	70	2.0%	£175,000
Music	871	25.4%	£2,177,500
Not Specified	402	11.7%	£1,005,000
Publishing	65	1.9%	£162,500
Theatre and Performing Arts	531	15.5%	£1,327,500
Visual Arts and Crafts	683	19.9%	£1,707,500
Total	3425	100.0%	£8,562,500

- Freelancers working in the music sector received the highest amount of total funding when compared to all other subsectors, accounting for 25% of the total funding awards.
- Freelancers working in the visual arts and crafts, theatre and performing arts, and film, TV and radio sectors also received a large proportion of the overall funding at over £1 million each.
- Individuals working in design industries received the fewest number of grants. However the eligibility criteria outlined that individuals were not entitled to receive funding if they were able to continue with usual work activity, which many of those working in the design sector would.
- 402 applicants (12%) did not specify or provide information on their area of work, therefore it is unknown what subsectors around £1 million worth of funds were awarded to.

Lessons Learned

A second round of funding for freelancers has since been announced, with findings from this initial analysis informing the delivery and improvement of the collection of data for this additional funding round.

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Appendix A: Total number of grants and overall amount awarded by local authority for phases 1-4 of the Freelancer Fund

Local Authority	Number of grants awarded (phases 1-4)	% of total grants awarded	Amount awarded (£)
Isle of Anglesey	137	2.2%	£342,500
Gwynedd	391	6.2%	£977,500
Conwy	252	4.0%	£630,000
Denbighshire	183	2.9%	£457,500
Flintshire	152	2.4%	£380,000
Wrexham	131	2.1%	£327,500
Powys	275	4.3%	£687,500
Ceredigion	190	3.0%	£475,000
Pembrokeshire	225	3.5%	£562,500
Carmarthenshire	328	5.2%	£820,000
Swansea	437	6.9%	£1,092,500
Neath Port Talbot	175	2.8%	£437,500
Bridgend	187	2.9%	£467,500
The Vale of Glamorgan	435	6.9%	£1,087,500
Cardiff	1545	24.3%	£3,862,500
Rhondda Cynon Taff	347	5.5%	£867,500
Merthyr Tydfil	53	0.8%	£132,500
Caerphilly	255	4.0%	£637,500
Blaenau Gwent	131	2.1%	£327,500
Torfaen	110	1.7%	£275,000
Monmouthshire	176	2.8%	£440,000
Newport	232	3.7%	£580,000
Total	6347	100.0%	£15,867,500

- Inclusive of the top-up funding, the number of grants total 6,347, which amounts to a total of £15,657,500 that was awarded overall from the first round of the Freelancer Fund.