



A CITY-WIDE
FESTIVAL
OF NEW WORKS

2024 REPORT



Fertile Ground's importance to the Portland community was immediately demonstrated as 35 producers registered 67 projects for the 2024 Festival.

Heading into the first in-person Festival since the winter of 2020 - and the first Festival taking place in April instead of January/February - we anticipated that 2024 would be a smaller, "re-growing" year. Fertile Ground's importance to the Portland community was immediately demonstrated as 35 producers registered 67 projects for the 2024 Festival. This was also the first year that Fertile Ground sought significant funding from foundations and granting organizations, and was honored as an inaugural recipient of Prosper Portland's "Scale Up" grant, among others.

Fertile Ground 2024 was the first Festival under the leadership of Festival Director **Tamara Carroll**, who was hired to fill this open position in September 2023. **Cassie Greer** joined Carroll in overseeing Festival operations as Managing Director for the 2024 season. **Eboni Lovell** joined the staff as Marketing Director, supported by Marketing Associate **Venus Edlin** and Graphic Designer **Jack Solomon**.

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THE RAW NUMBERS

35 Producers * 67 Projects * 25 Venues around the Metro Area
1 Official Festival Venue Partnership * 5000+ Tickets Issued
2000+ Unique Ticket-Buyers * 152 Festival Passes sold * \$9.85 Average Ticket Price

The 169 Festival attendees who responded to our survey came to attend Fertile Ground from 13 counties. 34% live outside the tri-county/Portland Metro region:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Bonner County (ID) - 1.69% | King County (WA) - 5.08% | Tillamook County (OR) - 1.69% |
| Clackamas County (OR) - 13.56% | Lane County (OR) - 1.69% | Washington County (OR) - 8.47% |
| Clark County (WA) - 13.56% | Marion County (OR) - 1.69% | Yamhill County (OR) - 3.39% |
| Cook County (IL) - 1.69% | Multnomah County (OR) - 44.07% | |
| Cowlitz County (WA) - 1.69% | Spokane County (WA) - 1.69% | |



REPORT ON 2024-2028 OBJECTIVES

ONE: SUPPORTING SMALL/INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS & PROJECTS

- in process Move to a co-production model that shares financial burden & provides mentorship
- in process Drive audience traffic to independent projects & small companies
- in process Continue to streamline systems for registration, ticketing, communication
- in process Expand reach and breadth of marketing, prioritizing projects with limited budgets
- in process Expand GROW grant program to provide direct funding to artists
- in process Remove the financial burden placed on producers by Festival Passes

TWO: ACCESSIBILITY

- in process Provide Festival-sponsored ASL interpreters for all projects
- in process Provide ADA accessible Festival venues
- complete Remove reliance on volunteer labor & budget to compensate Festival admin
- complete Continue GROW Grants to provide opportunities to underrepresented artists
- complete Compensate a diverse group of panelists to adjudicate GROW Grant applications

THREE: COMMUNITY IMPACT

- in process Designate official “Festival Venues” to become concentrated hubs of Festival activity
- yet to do Expand the Festival Pass to include discounts to local businesses
- yet to do Re-envision Festival Sponsorship as a high-visibility corporate sponsorship
- yet to do Increase artistic support and raise national profile for new and developing works

The remainder of the data in this report is based on direct feedback from Fertile Ground audience members and producers, collected through a series of post-event surveys.

Of 2000+ ticket-buyers, 169 provided survey responses.

Of 35 producers, 18 provided survey responses.

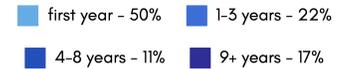
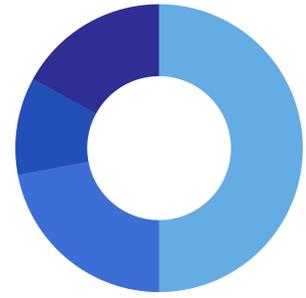


2024 FERTILE GROUND PRODUCERS

Half of responding Producers indicated that Fertile Ground 2024 was their first time producing as part of the Festival.

This was my first...Fertile Ground Festival and it was such an accommodating experience. Our show was the only Native production...and sometimes working in American Theatre it can feel isolating for our folk to feel included or seen. We very much appreciated...the support of highlighting our show and story.

- Amber Kay Ball, independent producer



Producers were asked about the identities of individuals in positions of leadership on their teams/at their organizations, and were able to select multiple options/answers.

Age:

28% ages 26-35

33% ages 36-49

56% ages 50-69

33% ages 70+

Dis/Ability:

17% identify as disabled, or impacted by disabling circumstances.

1% identify as d/Deaf or Hard of Hearing

17% identify as Neurodivergent

Gender & Sexuality:

83% Female; 56% Male; 33% Non-Binary

28% Gay; 22% Lesbian;

5% Bisexual or Pansexual; 17% Queer

Ethnicity & Race:

11% Asian or Pacific Islander

17% Black or African American

5% Indigenous or Native America

17% Latinx or Hispanic

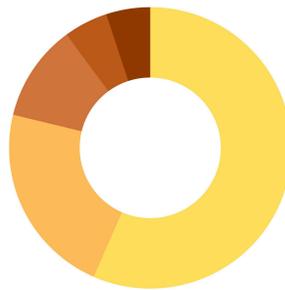
89% White or of European Descent

In seeking to continue to support these individuals and organizations, we were interested to know more about the budgets and existing funding sources of Fertile Ground projects.

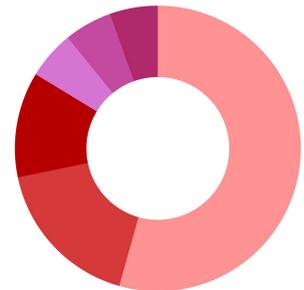
Total Fertile Ground Expenses



Most Significant Expense



Most Significant Funding Source



LEARNINGS FROM PRODUCER FEEDBACK

Producers were repeatedly commented positively on the **communication** with Fertile Ground and with our ticketing partner Wannago?

The staff was absolutely amazing! Thanks for answering our (many) questions and all the hand-holding! As someone who is neurodivergent, and working with people with disabilities, it was amazing to work with a team who put PEOPLE FIRST. I / we felt supported!!

- Rachael Himsel/GUTSY Productions

Caitlin [Wannago? representative] was extremely helpful and always prompt!

- Anonymous independent producer

The new **Meet the Media format** was largely appreciated – though the number of press representatives in attendance was disappointing.

I thought the set up for the Meet Media night worked well which was a different format than the past. It was a great sense of community by sharing what others were doing.

- Lakewood Theatre Company

...there were too few people from the media and when we did talk we couldn't hear each other well enough or talk for too long. However, there's more of a positive feeling that goes along w/performing for each other...

- Rogue Pack

The **Fertile Ground Website** was widely regarded as being in need of some refinement:

I found it a little difficult to navigate and it seemed like there were some unnecessary pages... Seems like it was difficult to keep track of the website organization on both ends.

- Rachel Routh, Basement Stair Collective

Noting which shows were staged readings; More accessibility info, like wheelchair-accessible venues; Wasn't crazy about the primary organization being by city/neighborhood.

- Cindy Brown, independent producer

And the long-standing challenges of **ticketing** Fertile Ground and reducing the financial burden of the **Festival Pass** on producers were also frequently articulated:

I really do like the pass, but it did reduce ticket sales.

- Chari Smith, independent producer

...it was consistently the pass holders who were no shows at performances. Not sure how to solve this or if it's even a real problem. Just a fact.

- Rogue Pack

2024 FERTILE GROUND AUDIENCES

The vast majority (90%) of audience members who responded to the survey identify as White or of European Descent. Other self-identifications where audience members were able to select multiple options/answers are as follows:

Ethnicity & Race:

outside of White/European Descent

1% Arab or Middle Eastern

4% Asian or Pacific Islander

1% Black or African American

1% East Indian

2% Indigenous or Native America

4% Latinx or Hispanic

2% Slavic

Gender & Sexuality:

83% Female; 56% Male; 33% Non-Binary

28% Gay; 22% Lesbian;

5% Bisexual or Pansexual; 17% Queer

Dis/Ability:

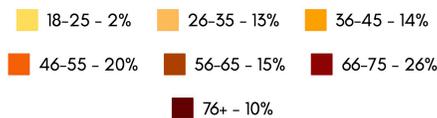
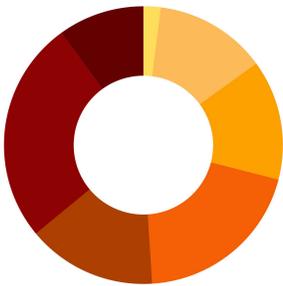
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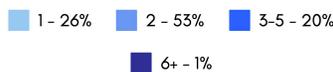
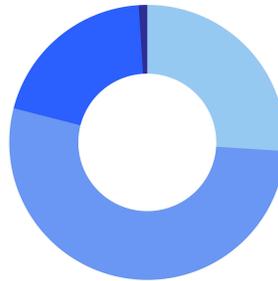
17% identify as Neurodivergent

Additional information about how Fertile Ground audiences identify:

Age



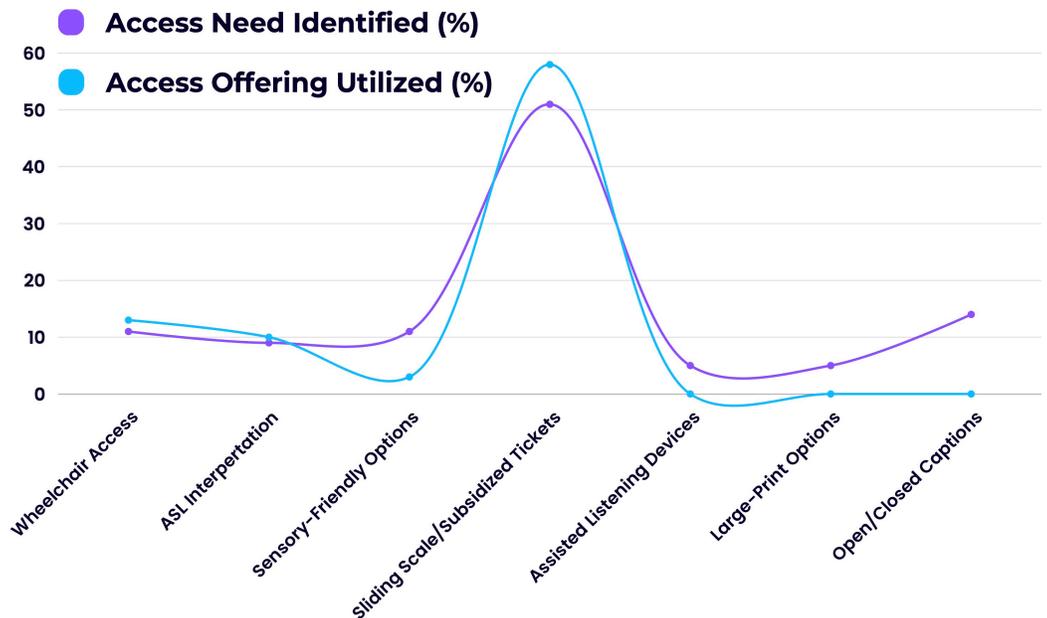
Size of Household



Household Income



In seeking to expand accessibility, we were interested to know more about the access needs of our audience, as well as the access offerings they utilized during Fertile Ground.



LEARNINGS FROM AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

Festival attendees had lots of enthusiasm about the **in-person return** of Fertile Ground

The whole thing was SPECTACULAR! ...I'm thrilled FG is back!

A colossal effort to revitalize live theatre - well done!

An outstanding experience! I am so happy to have FG back. Portland needs this so much. I can't begin to say how grateful I am to everyone who made this possible. It was a huge gift to the city, and to me. Thank you!

Loved the experience! Glad you're back! It felt like a positive and abundant week of new work by lots of different makers. Beautiful program. Good support.

The **Fertile Ground Website** and **ticketing pages**, however, presented myriad challenges

The calendar was difficult to parse when trying to figure out what I would be able to see.

It would be GREAT to be able to sort the shows by date on the website. Usually, that's our first filter -- what day(s) am I available to go -- then narrow it down from there... There was the ability to sort it by general location, but that (to me) is much less important than the dates.

as far as ticketing it would have been nice to add ALL the shows I wanted to see to the cart and have just ONE checkout, instead of multiple.

The ticketing Web site for a la carte play purchases was confusing and took a while to figure out

And the packed **schedule**, unclear **communication**/incomplete information, and late arrival of the printed **Festival Guide** hindered audience abilities to attend as many performances as they would have liked

Too many shows competing at the same times for the same audience members. Some curation or limitation...might be good to avoid fragmenting the available audience across many shows...

I would have preferred that the festival be spread over 2 weeks.

I would have liked better descriptions of the type of performance, or be able to sort within each geographic area by type of performance. There were too many staged readings that weren't clear in their descriptions that they weren't full productions.

I really wish I had had a printed Fertile Ground Festival Guide at the beginning, rather than midway through the festival, as it made it easier for me to look for shows.

ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES

Learnings from Fertile Ground 2024 have inspired additions to the Festival's list of objectives:

- **COMMUNITY:** Recruit for the Fertile Ground committee to develop representation of diverse leadership
- **ACCESS:** Shift to year-round administration rather than seasonal positions to maintain consistency and stability
- **ACCESS:** Host accessibility trainings for producers at the beginning of the process to inspire creative decisions with disabled audiences in mind
- **ACCESS:** Collaborate with a web accessibility expert to make incremental improvements to existing website.
- **PRODUCERS:** Create a system of volunteer hours for producers to in order to cover registration fees, and possibly venue fees
- **ACCESS:** Ask producers to provide/make accessibility information public for every show, including:
 - Show length and intermission estimates
 - Performance type (reading, staged production, experimental, etc)
 - Age appropriateness/content information
 - Parking/public transportation options
 - Seating info (stools, wide seats, chairs without backs)
 - Features/barriers for every performance venue for both audiences and artists (Stairs, handrails, captions, assistive listening devices, ASL, bathrooms, masking expectations, etc)
 - Contact info for access questions
- **ACCESS:** Organize assistive listening devices at venues and produce large print options for the festival program.
- **ACCESS:** Grow deeper relationships with region's Deaf/Hard of Hearing community and interpreters.
- **COMMUNITY/PRODUCERS:** Develop fundraising and business partnerships to help in reducing financial barriers for producers.

