



# Monitoring and Evaluation of Circular Culture, the British Council Americas Fund for the Development of Sustainable Festivals



# Contents

Executive Summary	3	Festival image and positioning	26
Introduction	5	Replicability	27
Context	5		
Methodology	5		
Limitations	9		
<hr/>			
Effectiveness of integration	9	Lessons Learned and recommendations	27
Growing interest in Circular Culture	10	Lessons learned	28
Participating in Circular Culture	12		
Impact and success	14		
<hr/>			
Capacity building impact	15	Appendix 1: Theory of Change for Circular Culture	30
Prior knowledge and understanding	15	Appendix 2: Interviews with Circular Culture beneficiaries	31
Contribution of Circular Culture to skills and knowledge acquisition	16	Appendix 3: REF Data received	33
The role of cultural events in broader sustainable practice	18	Appendix 4: Survey Data Tables	34
Opportunities for further learning	19	Appendix 5: Case studies	54
<hr/>			
Sustainability metrics	20	Bitbang	54
Operational and logistical enhancements	20	Ranchear	55
Environmental impact	21	Festival Internacional de Cine de Mar de Plata	56
Audience expansion and diversification	22	Afropunk Brasil	57
<hr/>			
Stakeholder engagement	23	Barulhinho Delas	59
Engaging with UK artists	24	Disonarte	60
Working with the British Council	25	Ecomanigua	61
<hr/>			
Longevity and replicability	25	FIL Niños	63
Commitment to continuity	25	Festival Artístico Audiovisual Afrodescendencias	64
		1º Festival Mar, Conciencia y Soundsystem	65
		COCO Dance Festival	67
		Festival Ascenso	68

# Executive Summary

Circular Culture is the British Council's fund for the development of sustainable festivals. Established in 2021, the programme operates across the Latin American and Caribbean (LATAC) cultural sector, providing financial and training resources to festivals in order to facilitate cultural exchange and promote the development of a sustainable cultural sector.

In summer 2024, BOP Consulting undertook an evaluation of the Circular Culture programme to date, looking to assess the impact of the programme against a series of evaluation questions that were focused around five key themes: the effectiveness of integration of the programme; the capacity building impact of the programme; the measurable improvements that have been observed in sustainability metrics through participating in the programme; changes in stakeholder engagement; and the contribution of the programme to the longevity of festivals alongside replicability of the model to other cultural sectors.

## Effectiveness of integration

Since the pilot year in 2021, there has been a consistent rise in the number of cultural festivals applying to participate in Circular Culture. There has also been a rise in the breadth of festivals participating as the British Council has sought to expand the programme to more countries within the LATAC region.

Festivals have a range of motivations for participating in Circular Culture, with the two main reasons being a need for financial support and the opportunity for collaborating with UK artists. Given the interrelation of these two motivations (as grants awarded by Circular Culture are for the purpose of facilitating creative partnerships with the UK), this demonstrates the value placed on this strand of the programme by participants.

Additionally, Circular Culture has had a significant impact on participants' understanding of sustainability, with the majority of participants noting an increase in knowledge of sustainable practices through the programme.

## Capacity building impact

Circular Culture has made significant contributions to participants' knowledge, skills, and competencies. Whilst festivals were likely to have prior understanding of sustainability issues, they were much less likely to have the necessary practical skills required for responding to these issues before taking part. They also noted struggling historically with finding further information and support.

In contrast, following participation, responding festivals described having both faster and greater acquisition of the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies needed for responding to sustainability issues.

There were four key areas that were impacted through capacity building: understanding and implementing sustainability practices; strategic planning and management; accessibility and inclusion; and collaboration and networking.

Alongside the impacts on responding festivals' own organisational capacity, Circular Culture also helped participants to identify the wider role they can play in contributing to broader cultural and social attitudes around sustainability. This is helping to support a narrative shift around the responsibility of cultural events in relation to sustainability.

## Sustainability metrics

There has been a significant increase in environmental awareness among festival organisers as a result of Circular Culture, with sustainability integrated much more frequently into participating festival's programmes. There have also been improvements in festival operations as a result of knowledge gained through Circular Cultural, for example in relation to waste management and energy-efficient practices.

Several festivals have also reported that they have increased and/or diversified audiences as a result of implementing sustainability initiatives following participation in Circular Culture. However many festivals have continued to face challenges related to financial and resource limitations, particularly in implementing more extensive sustainability measures.

## Stakeholder engagement

Nearly all of the participating festivals were able to connect with UK based artists as a result of taking part in Circular Culture, with previous engagement barriers around budget limitations mitigated by the grant funding. Through the funding, festivals were able to create meaningful connections with British artists leading to knowledge sharing and mentorship.

By working directly with UK artists, most festivals felt that they gained a stronger understanding of UK values and professional sustainability standards. Festivals also valued working with the British Council, and felt that participating in the programme enhanced their credibility and was likely to make a positive impact on future international funding opportunities.

### Longevity and replicability

Participating festivals have reported that they are committed to applying their learnings to their practice, supporting their long-term growth and sustainability. Some festivals have already seen a positive influence on their public image and positioning which in turn has strengthened their ability to attract more investment, further supporting their longer term ambitions.

As a programme, Circular Culture's strength lies in its adaptability, making it well suited for replication in other parts of the cultural sector with established frameworks such as museums and opera.

### Conclusions and recommendations

Through the research it can be seen that Circular Culture is making a positive impact on participating festivals. There have been increases in knowledge, skills, and capabilities, and festivals are already reporting tangible impacts on their events in relation to their sustainable practices. Alongside this, festivals are able to engage in new and innovative collaborations with UK artists, creating benefit for professionals on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as increasing the breadth of cultural offerings available to festival audiences.

When looking to apply the lessons from this evaluation to future iterations of the programme, recommendations can largely be grouped into a series of key themes, as follows:

#### 1. Long term support and economic resources

- Increase and extend economic support to ensure the long term sustainability of festivals.
- Implement a tiered funding approach based on the size and specific needs of each festival.
- Some festivals would benefit from funding to implement sustainable initiatives either in addition to, or instead of, exchange funding.

#### 2. Personalised and specialised support

- Provide more personalised, incubator style assistance to festivals, for example one-on-one mentoring and customised training sessions,
- Tailor training sessions to specific context of different regions and types of festivals.

#### 3. Regional collaboration

- Improve communication channels between festivals and support networks, including the British Council.
- Create opportunities for festivals to collaborate and share experiences both during and beyond the programme.

#### 4. Training and capacity building

- Contextualise training sessions to the specific needs and contexts of participating festivals.
- Implement follow-up actions post-training to maintain momentum.

#### 5. Process recommendations

- Ensure existing tools for assessing applications are used by all participating country managers to increase transparency and consistency of decision making.
- Create a centrally consolidated list of relevant external stakeholders.
- Consider whether a requirement to participate in monitoring and evaluation is appropriate as part of participating festivals' grant terms.

# Introduction

## Context

BOP Consulting was commissioned by the British Council to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Circular Culture programme. This report presents findings of ongoing activity with a particular focus on its current year three iteration. The evaluation also considers activity that took place in years one and two to assess the programme's relevance and the British Council's role in connecting culture and sustainability.

This report examines the breadth of Circular Culture across the Latin American and Caribbean (LATAC) region, drawing on evidence from a range of different sources including 12 case studies of participating festivals which can be found as a standalone companion document.

The analysis for this report centres on five key areas that align with the evaluation questions set by the British Council for this work: the effectiveness of integration; capacity building impact; sustainability metrics; stakeholder engagement; and the longevity and replicability of the participating festivals.

## Methodology

For this report, we have used the following research methods to understand the extent to which the Circular Culture programme, and, by extension, the British Council, is meeting its goals.

- Evidence review of available data
- Interviews
- Development of the monitoring and evaluation framework
- Survey with grant beneficiaries
- Interviews with beneficiaries and follow-up case studies

## Evidence review of available data

An evidence review was conducted to understand the programme's scope and development. This included analysing documents related to the programme's expansion, evolving model and delivery, in addition to strategic documents, scale reports, previous evaluations (including a feedback survey on capacity building and training activities from Julie's Bicycle), and promotional materials.

## Interviews with programme managers

Interviews were conducted with British Council programme managers from participating countries to gain operational insights. The information gathered from these interviews helped shape the monitoring and evaluation framework, including the development of relevant indicators and data collection methods.

## Development of the monitoring and evaluation framework

Using insights from the evidence review and interviews, a monitoring and evaluation framework was created. This framework includes a Theory of Change (*Figure 1*) that outlines the expected outcomes and impacts, aligning with the programme's evaluation questions (*Table 2*).

## Survey with grant beneficiaries

A web-based survey was shared with 109 grant beneficiaries from participating festivals since 2021 to gather data on their experiences with Circular Culture. The survey was open for responses for a period of two weeks and available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. In total, the survey received 25 responses in Spanish, 4 in Portuguese, and 2 in English.

## Interviews with beneficiaries, and follow-up case studies

21 interviews (*listed in Appendix 2*) were conducted with festival beneficiaries, ensuring a diverse representation across different regions and festival types. Interviews were conducted in a range of languages to ensure that participants were able to speak freely and without hesitation when asked about their experiences. Where practical, interviewee responses have been anonymised.

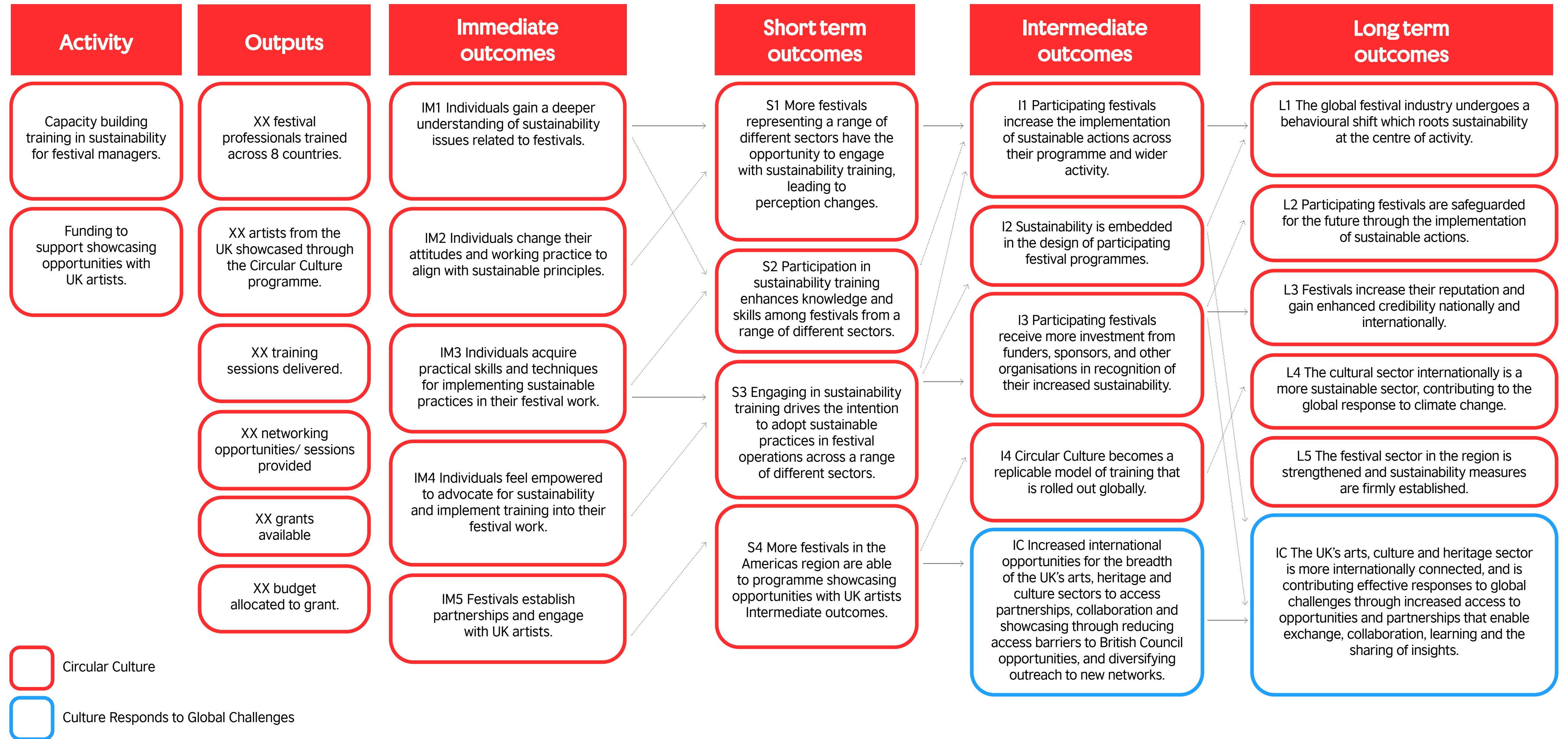
Of these case studies, 12 were selected for further interviewing and discussion, and developed into case studies based around the experiences of participating festivals. The selected case studies are listed below (*Table 1*) and are detailed in a standalone appendix.

Table 1: List of case studies

Festival	Country	City (State)	Art Form
Bitbang	Argentina	Buenos Aires	Videogames and Animation
Ranchar	Argentina	Buenos Aires	Music
Festival cine Mar del Plata	Argentina	Mar del Plata	Film
Afropunk	Brasil	Salvador	Music
Barulhinho Delas	Brasil	Fortaleza	Multidisciplinary
Festival Disonarte	Colombia	Ibagué	Music
Ecomanigua	Cuba	La Habana	Visual Arts
Feria Internacional del Libro Guadalajara (FIL Niños)	México	Jalisco	Editorial
Festival Artístico Audiovisual Afrodescendencias	México	Oaxaca, Guerrero	Multidisciplinary
1º Festival Mar, Conciencia y Soundsystem	Perú	Lima	Music
COCO Dance	Trinidad and Tobago	Port of Spain	Dance
Festival Ascenso	Venezuela	Caracas	Photography

Source: BOP Consulting, 2024

Figure 1: Simplified Theory of Change for Circular Culture



A detailed version of the Theory of Change can be found in Appendix 1: Theory of Change for Circular Culture

Table 2: Theory of Change Outcomes Framework

Evaluation questions		Relevant ToC outcomes
<b>1. Effectiveness of Integration:</b>	a. What is the contribution of Circular Culture programme in the Americas to provide festivals the needed training and connections to become more sustainable?	IM1, IM3, S1, S2
	b. To what extent have the UK-Americas connections been successfully integrated into the grant application process?	IM5, S4
	c. How has the programme contributed to the objectives of our Global Programme Culture Responds to Global Challenges?	IM1, IM2, IM4, IM5, S1, SA-D, IA-F, LA-C
	d. To what extent has the programme contributed to sharing UK Values and Standards and to supporting action in climate?	IM5, S1, S2, I1, I2, LA, LB
<b>2. Capacity Building Impact:</b>	a. How has the capacity building of Circular Culture influenced the skills and practices of festival managers in relation to sustainability standards?	IM2, IM3, IM4, S2, I1, I2, L1
	b. How has the capacity building strand helped to acknowledge a narrative shift in the responsibility of cultural events with climate change?	IM1, IM2, IM4, S3, I2, L1
	c. What practices to embed sustainability or circularity in the capacity building track of Circular Culture worked and which ones didn't?	IM3, IM4, S1 I1
<b>3. Sustainability Metrics:</b>	a. What measurable improvements have been observed in sustainability metrics because of the programme's initiatives in festival design and operations?	IM2, IM3, S3, I1, I2, L1
<b>4. Stakeholder engagement:</b>	a. In what ways has stakeholder engagement been enhanced, and how has it positively affected the festivals credibility, responsibility, and attractiveness to potential investors?	I3, L3
<b>5. Longevity and replicability:</b>	a. To what extent has the programme contributed to the longevity of festivals and how applicable is the model to diverse cultural sectors beyond festivals?	IM2, IM3, I4, S3, I3, I4, L2, L3, L4, L5
	b. What is the perceived level of attractiveness for investment in festivals that have undergone the programme and how does this align with the initial goals?	I3, L3

## Limitations

The research faced three primary limitations: limited availability of integrated data from the British Council's Research and Evidence Framework (REF), a low survey response rate, and the unavailability of additional external stakeholders for interviews.

### 1. Limited REF data available

We intended to use REF data to supplement our research tools and support our research, and assess the reach and impact of the Circular Culture programme. However, due to its limited availability, our analysis primarily depends on the scale reports, along with insights from interviews and survey data collected. A list of REF data that was received from the British Council can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

### 2. Low survey response rate

The survey received an overall response rate of 28.4%. However, the actual number of responses was low, in part due to the small population of participants available for surveying due to the relative infancy of the programme. Additionally, not all questions were answered by all respondents, further reducing the response rate for some questions. This means that there is reduced representativeness of the findings which may introduce bias as it is likely that it is only those participants most engaged with the programme (for positive and negative reasons, i.e. most keen to share their experience) are the ones that participated in the survey.

### 3. Unavailability of external stakeholders

Aside from an interview with a contact at Julie's Bicycle, we were unable to engage with additional external stakeholders such as other delivery partners, environmental advocacy groups and regulatory bodies. This limited our understanding of the wider context and external factors influencing the programme's impact.

# Effectiveness of integration

## Key Findings

- Since its pilot in 2021, there has been a consistent rise in cultural festivals across LATAC applying to take part in Circular Culture, aligning with the British Council's global objectives by encouraging broader participation.
- The two main motivations for participating in Circular Culture are the need for financial support and the opportunity to collaborate with UK artists. Participants are particularly interested in securing resources to help fund festival operations, while also valuing the potential for creative partnerships with the UK.
- Circular Culture has made a significant impact on participants' understanding of sustainability. The majority of participants noted that the programme enhanced their knowledge of sustainable practices.
- Rising engagement in Circular Culture reflects a broader shift towards environmental responsibility and collective action on climate change

This chapter assesses the effectiveness of the Circular Culture programme in the Americas and its impact on advancing sustainability practices among participating festivals. It highlights the programme's role in offering essential sustainability training and building connections, while also promoting UK values.

## The Circular Culture Programme

The British Council has an ongoing strategic goal of strengthening the UK's arts, culture and heritage sector by building international connections and contributing to global challenges through increased opportunities for collaboration, learning and shared insights. One initiative, the Circular Culture programme, launched in 2021, offers grants to promote sustainability in festivals and support cultural connections between the UK and countries in the Americas, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela.

The programme began in Mexico as part of the strategic recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, aiming to revitalise the cultural sector which had been impacted by the pandemic's shutdown of public cultural activities. Coinciding with this effort, UNESCO's MONDIACULT conference on culture and sustainable development was announced, providing an opportunity to highlight culture's role within the sustainability framework.

In its first year, Circular Culture partnered with Napier University in Edinburgh to deliver a short training programme for festival managers and produce a related publication. Since then, the programme has continued to expand. It provides funding and training to enhance artistic exchange between LATAC countries and the UK, focusing on strengthening cultural festivals through their sustainability practices. Additionally, the programme aims to professionalise the LATAC cultural sector by offering training for festival managers with expertise from UK professionals.

Figure 2: Circular Culture programme model



The programme operates through three main components:

- **Festival Grants:** Funding for festivals to feature UK and Americas collaborations, selected by a panel of sustainability experts from both regions.
- **UK Connections:** Building an international network of advocates and practitioners to promote understanding of culture and sustainability, engaging diverse groups such as artistic communities, government agencies, and research institutions.
- **Sustainability training:** Integrating sustainability standards into festival planning and operations to reduce environmental impacts and raise awareness within the cultural sector.

Through these components, the programme aims to promote:

1. **Exchange among local artists, creators, and managers:** Encouraging collaboration and exchange within the region.
2. **Public access to international talent:** Facilitating access to international artists, creators, researchers and scientists.
3. **Skills training for sustainable development:** Offering technical training and support sustainable working practices.
4. **Knowledge networks and global cultural exchange:** Creating international collaborations and discussions on culture and sustainability.

## Growing interest in Circular Culture

Interest in the Circular Culture Programme has grown due to increasing global awareness of climate change and the push for sustainable practices. Cultural institutions and festivals across the Americas are increasingly involved, seeking ways to reduce their environmental impact and align their efforts with internal climate goals.

During its pilot year, the programme received approximately 200 applications. Since then, as the programme has become fully operational, the programme has gained traction across the LATAC region. There has been increased awareness through targeted marketing and outreach efforts, which have contributed to a noticeable increase in the number of applications (Table 3).

This increased awareness of the programme has seen applications surge to over 1,000 applications in 2022-2023. In particular Venezuela saw a significant jump from 14 to 190 applications, whilst Argentina, Peru, and Brazil also experienced notable increases.

In 2023-2024, the total number of applications continued to rise, reaching 1,082 – a 7.8% increase from the previous year, in part fuelled by the use of a targeted communications campaign that focussed on priority countries. This continued growth is particularly evident in Argentina, which saw application surge from 29 in 2021-2022 to 150 in 2023-2024. Brazil and Peru also maintained

upward trends, reflecting the success of ongoing outreach and expansion efforts. Meanwhile, countries such as Colombia, Chile, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, which have been later additions to the portfolio of countries, have contributed to the overall interest and participation of Circular Culture.

In contrast, Venezuela saw a significant decline in applicants in the most recent year, falling by nearly three quarters to 52 applications, however this may be due to country-specific challenges, as well as not being a priority county for the communications campaign. There has also been a slight decline in applications from Mexico, however this is less significant and still represents the third highest number of applications from any given country (the same position as in 2022-23).

Table 3: Number of applications for Circular Culture between 2021-2024

Country	# Applications 2021-2022	# Applications 2022-2023	# Applications 2023-2024
Argentina	29	90	150
Brasil	40	165	205
Chile	0	0	61
Colombia	0	277	290
Cuba	0	0	12
Jamaica	0	0	32
México	104	181	171
Perú	5	77	80
Trinidad y Tobago	0	17	29
Venezuela	14	190	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>1004</b>	<b>1082</b>

Source: British Council

### Motivations to join Circular Culture

Our research indicates that the Circular Culture programme grant is a vital source of funding, making it the joint primary reason for participation given the region's limited resources, alongside the motivation to collaborate with UK artists, where festivals had the opportunity to learn UK values and standards. Additionally, participants were motivated to develop sustainability skills and enhance their understanding of sustainability for their festivals.

Table 4: Survey respondents' main motivation to join Circular Culture

Motivation for Participation	Count of responses
Financial support	7
Collaborate with UK artists	7
Developing a better understanding of sustainability for your festival	5
To develop skills to be able to implement sustainability actions for your festival	3

Source: BOP Consulting, 2024

“

“We are a tiny festival, and we are always seeking financial support to maintain our offering. We thought that this was a good opportunity to get additional funding, provide a collaboration for a T&T and UK artist (since our offerings are local, regional and international) and to take our sustainability goals to another level.”

Circular Culture participant, Trinidad and Tobago

“It's a unique opportunity to get financial support, in exchange for artists and institutions from the UK. This is a very important differentiator of the program, and being related to environmental agendas for the festival is also fundamental.”

Circular Culture participant, Brazil

### UK-Americas grant application process

A template was created for participating countries to evaluate grant applications using a scoring matrix that emphasises several key factors. The matrix (Table 5) places the highest weight on UK collaboration, focusing on proposals that align with sustainable operations and international exchange, highlighting the programmes intent on building partnerships with the UK.

However, our research shows that only Brazil and Argentina have adopted this matrix in their evaluation process. Despite the requirement for all festivals to engage with a UK artist, the limited use of the matrix suggests that country managers are not fully utilising the resources available to them.

The implication is that while UK involvement is mandatory, without broader use of the provided tool, participating countries in the Americas may not be maximising the potential for deeper UK collaboration and exchange.

Table 5: Application evaluation scoring matrix

Criteria	Weight %
<b>UK collaboration and Open call</b> Quality of the proposal aligned with the collaboration with the United Kingdom and the guidelines of this open call: (1) sustainable operations and (2) international exchange.	40
<b>Budget and execution time</b> Feasibility of the proposal and compatibility with budget and execution time.	20
<b>Experience</b> Previous experience with festivals and/or cultural activities	25
<b>Audiences</b> Impact on audiences (quantity and/or quality)	15

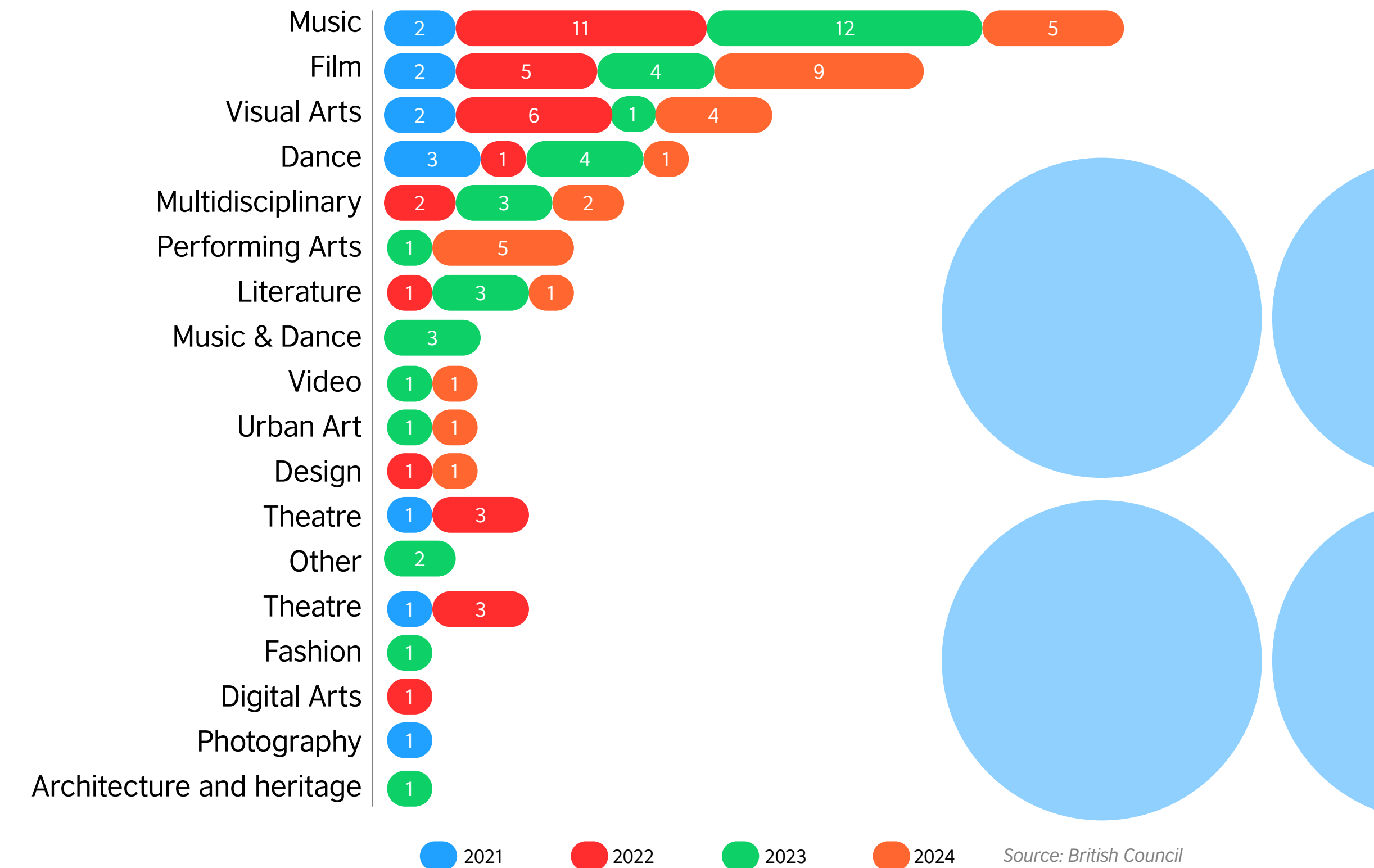
Source: British Council

## Participating in Circular Culture

To date, 109 festivals across the Americas have participated in Circular Culture. While music and film festivals continue to dominate, there has been a notable increase in the diversity of art forms represented in more recent cycles. Theatre was prominent in 2021 and 2022 but has since declined, whereas film has grown steadily, reaching its highest representation in 2024.

Festivals with emerging art forms such as urban art, photography, and video have also gained traction, reflecting a shift towards more contemporary and diverse expressions. This variety has enabled the British Council to support sustainability across both traditional and evolving artistic disciplines.

Figure 3: Art forms of participating festivals each year between 2021 and 2024



## Programme activities and offerings

Since the inception of Circular Culture, the British Council has partnered with Julie's Bicycle, a non-profit organisation that collaborates with the arts and culture sector to address climate change. Julie's Bicycle were motivated to join the programme as a delivery partner due to the identified "strong need" for this initiative in the region, and their goal to amplify sustainability. With extensive experience in mobilising the arts and culture sectors in addressing climate issues, the team were well-equipped to continue developing the training programme. For the 2023-2024 cohort, the programme included:

1. A series of training sessions to explore sustainability and ecology topics, learn about case studies and hold spaces for reflection and debate.
2. Networking sessions to share experiences with other cultural organisations and agents.
3. Individual mentoring sessions with participants.

A 2023 feedback report by the British Council and Julie's Bicycle showed that 100% of survey respondents felt the training sessions met their expectations, with the content rated as excellent or good. The sessions 'Why does it matter what we do?' and 'How do we foster change within and outside our festival? (Part I)' received particularly positive feedback. The Julie's Bicycle team built on this success by enhancing training content for 2023-2024. They shifted their focus from larger festivals to smaller ones, emphasising regional examples that addressed social issues, such as volunteer engagement and audience communication. The content was specifically tailored to include topics like environmental justice and how to leverage existing infrastructure.

To improve relatability, the team incorporated more case studies and speakers from the region, ensuring the training was relevant to current political happenings in Latin America. Additionally, they continued to draw insights from UK festivals, particularly for larger festivals focusing on monitoring and evaluating energy management and material usage.

This shift in focus made the training more relevant and impactful for smaller festivals, addressing their specific needs. Insights from the UK helped festivals adopt sustainable practices while staying true to their local context. This was evident in 2024, where 47.6% of the 21 survey respondents agreed that the training was relevant to festivals like theirs.

However, smaller and medium festivals with limited resources continued to express a need for **more practical sessions on sustainability and resource management**. A participant from Mexico highlighted the need for more appropriate tools stating, "*most of us were small projects and it would have been nice to know tools that had a more realistic application*". Despite this, the 2023-2024 cohort generally praised the sessions for being both inspiring and relevant.

*"The meetings were very inspiring and stimulating. They organize the topics in a way that we always have something about our festival to add. There was always something we could use to improve our festival's sustainability guidelines at the sessions, they were very good."*

*Circular Culture participant, Argentina*

*"It makes all the difference when you learn from someone who loves what they are talking about, and we could feel the Circular Culture team was very passionate about the environment and believed that every action counts, even if it is a small one."*

*Circular Culture participant, Argentina*

*"The Festival, like other festivals organized by the Mexico City Theatre Network has a limited budget, however we are aware of the need to implement actions that favour sustainability. The Circular Culture program definitely contributes to this cause and also allows us to provide knowledge to our decision makers regarding the impact of our decisions and actions in the field of sustainability and environmental care."*

*Circular Culture participant, Mexico*

## Ranchar Buenos Aires, Argentina

Ranchar, a music festival based in Argentina demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability by sending five staff members, each responsible for a different sector of the festival, to participate in specialised training sessions. While most festivals only sent one or two team members, Ranchar's approach stood out for their emphasis on upskilling and changing the attitudes of their wider team.



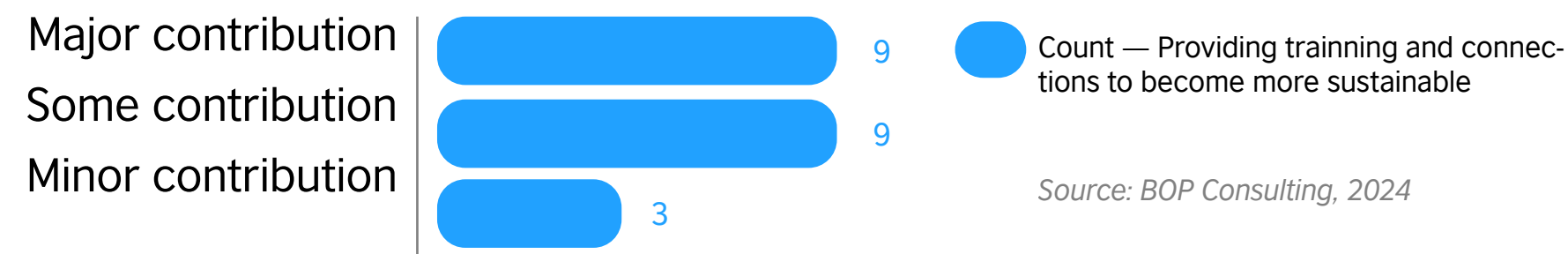
This proactive measure allowed the team to gain a comprehensive understanding of the environmental challenges associated with festival production and operations. The participants shared the knowledge acquired during the training with their colleagues, creating a culture of sustainability within the entire organisation.

Inspired to develop solutions to environmental issues they encounter, the festival partnered with Balcon de Bicicletas, a local bicycle repair company. This collaboration had multiple benefits: it encouraged festival attendees to travel by bicycle, thus minimising the event's carbon footprint,

and provided on-site repair services for those cycling to the festival. Additionally, the partnership supported a local business and reinforced the festival’s dedication to promoting sustainable transportation options.

Survey results show that the Circular Culture programme significantly contributed to festival sustainability by offering essential training and opportunities to improve sustainable practices. Supporting this, according to a 2023/2024 report by Julie’s Bicycle, 43% of the 30 survey respondents aimed to enhance public and audience engagement in future festivals following involvement with the programme.

Figure 4: The extent to which Circular Culture has contributed to festivals becoming more sustainable



In the Julie’s Bicycle survey, 50% of respondents identified a lack of knowledge on addressing climate action across different areas as a major challenge to implementing environmental initiatives. Our research found festivals echoed this concern, emphasising the need for practical strategies to achieve sustainability, especially when they don’t own their own headquarters or have limited resources. The lack of control over physical spaces combined with constrained budgets further complicated efforts. Festival participants requested support in accessing financial, technical and operational guidance to overcome these barriers and integrate sustainability into their practices.

*“I would have liked to see training around co-financing alternatives or complementary management lines for access to financial, technical, logistical and human resources also oriented to sustainability and social impact initiatives.”*  
Circular Culture participant, Colombia

# Impact and success

Circular Culture has been highly effective in promoting sustainability within festivals. As detailed in Chapter 3, the programme has significantly influenced how festivals integrate sustainable practices into their design and operations. Through targeted training, participants have adopted measures that align with both their festival capacities and global sustainability goals. Additionally, the programme supports the British Council’s global objectives by supporting the Culture Responds to Global Challenges initiative, connecting culture with climate action. It also facilitates UK-Americas relationships, enabling cross-global collaboration on sustainability.

## Experiences of participants

Respondents were generally very favourable towards the Circular Culture programme, with vast majority being highly likely to recommend the programme to their network citing its positive impact and the tangible benefits it provides.

Table 6: The likelihood survey respondents will recommend Circular Culture

How likely are you to recommend the Circular Culture programme to your network?	Count of responses
10 - extremely likely	11
9	2
8	1
7	0
6	0
5	1
4	0
3	0
2	0
1	0
0 – not likely	1

Source: BOP Consulting, 2024

Participants appreciated the experience, support, and benefits of Circular Culture, including how it influenced their values and practices towards sustainability. They also valued the networking opportunities, and opportunities for collaboration, particularly with UK artists and institutions.

Table 7: Key themes for recommending Circular Culture

Themes
Interest in sustainability
Financial support
International collaborations & cultural exchange
Festival Development
Knowledge sharing
Sustainability focused training
Promotion of environmental integration

Source: BOP Consulting, 2024

One respondent was neutral about recommending the programme, as they felt that they didn't learn a lot from it. They did however acknowledge that they have recommended Circular Culture to a different festival in their region that has a different structure which they feel may fit better with the aims of Circular Culture.

## Capacity building impact

### Key Findings

- Festivals were likely to have an understanding of sustainability issues before participating in the programme, however they were generally lacking in practical skills and knowledge, as well as being uncertain where to find further support and information.

- Participating in Circular Culture contributes to participants understanding of sustainability, with participants describing the programme as enabling both faster and greater acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies than would otherwise have been possible.
- The specific knowledge, skills and competencies participants gained fell into four key areas: understanding and implementing sustainability practices; strategic planning and management; accessibility and inclusion; and collaboration and networking.
- Through participating in Circular Culture, festivals not only built their own capacity, they also developed a greater recognition of the role they have to play in contributing to broader cultural and social attitudes towards sustainability. This is helping to support a wider narrative shift around the responsibility of cultural events in relation to sustainability.

This chapter explores the impact of the Circular Culture programme on the capacity of participating festivals. In particular it seeks to explore the extent to which the programme has influenced skills and practices at participating festivals, as well as the extent to which this has contributed to a wider narrative shift around the role of cultural events in relation to sustainability.

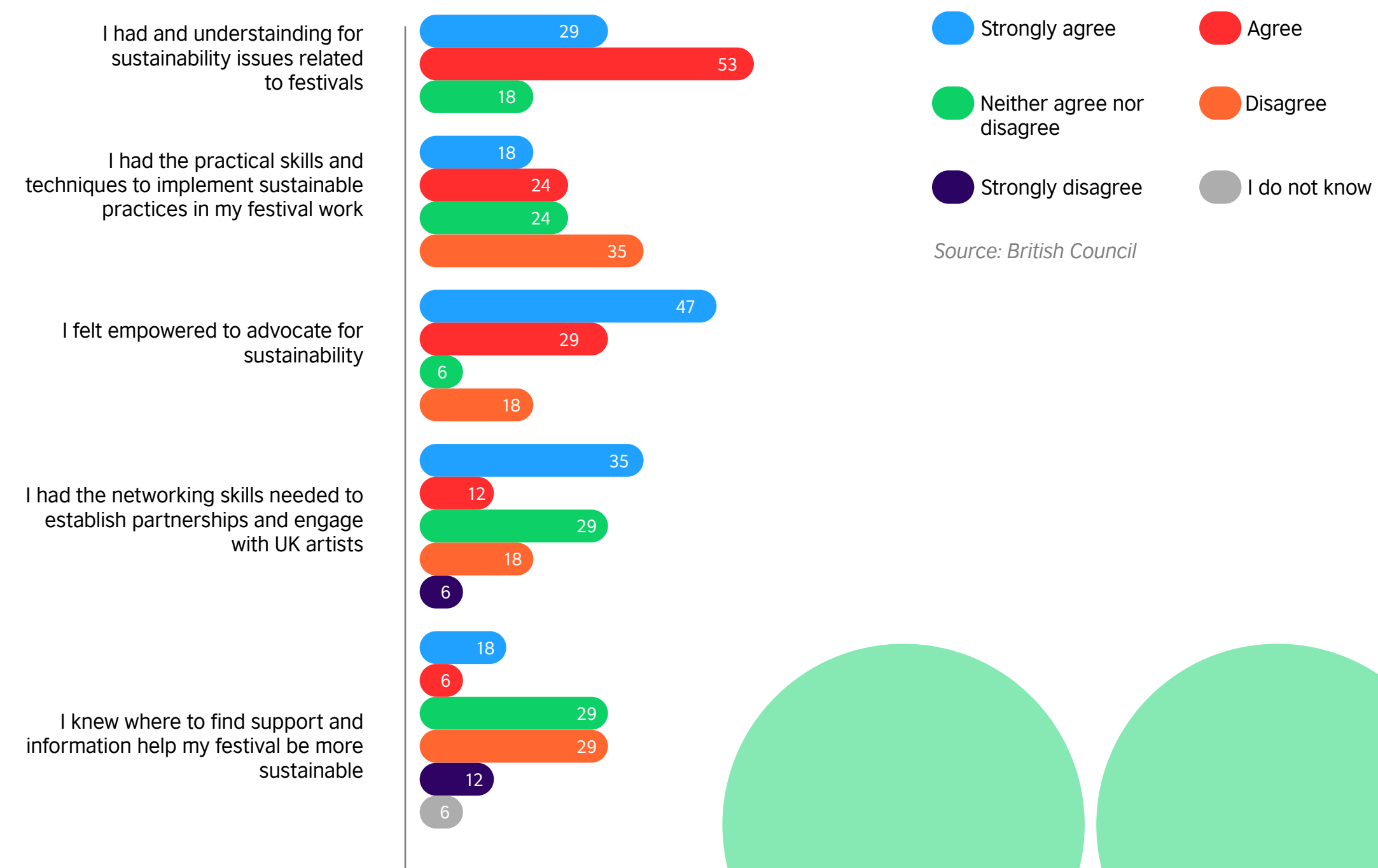
### Prior knowledge and understanding

In order to understand the extent to which Circular Culture has increased capacity at participating festivals, it is important to understand the levels of knowledge and understanding that existed prior to taking part in the programme.

A significant majority of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had an understanding of sustainability issues related to festivals before participating in the programme (82%, equivalent to 14 out of 17 respondents). More broadly, 71% (12) of respondents agreed that they were empowered to advocate for sustainability before participating in Circular Culture. However, participants were less likely to agree that they had the practical skills and techniques that they needed to implement sustainable practices in their festival work prior to participation – 10 (58%) either disagreed (6 / 35%) or were neutral (4 / 23%). Participants also largely did not know where to find support and information to help their festival be more sustainable, with 8 (47%) strongly disagreeing. Taken together, this presents a picture of a festivals sector that recognises the importance of sustainability standards and moving operations towards a more sustainable approach whilst simultaneously being stymied by a lack of existing skills in the sector and a lack of awareness for how to develop and improve existing skills. This reinforces the need for a programme like Circular Culture that is both able to provide tailored training in these practical skills and is delivered through a recognised and trusted organisation.

Alongside sustainability training, Circular Culture provides opportunities for participating festivals to engage with artists in the UK through the allocation of a grant that can be used for this purpose. Participants were largely split on the extent to which they had the networking skills that they needed to establish partnerships and engage with UK artists before participating – whilst 8 (47%) agreed or strongly agreed, 9 (53%) disagreed or were neutral.

Figure 5: Respondents level of agreement with statements related to their skills and competencies before participating in Circular Culture



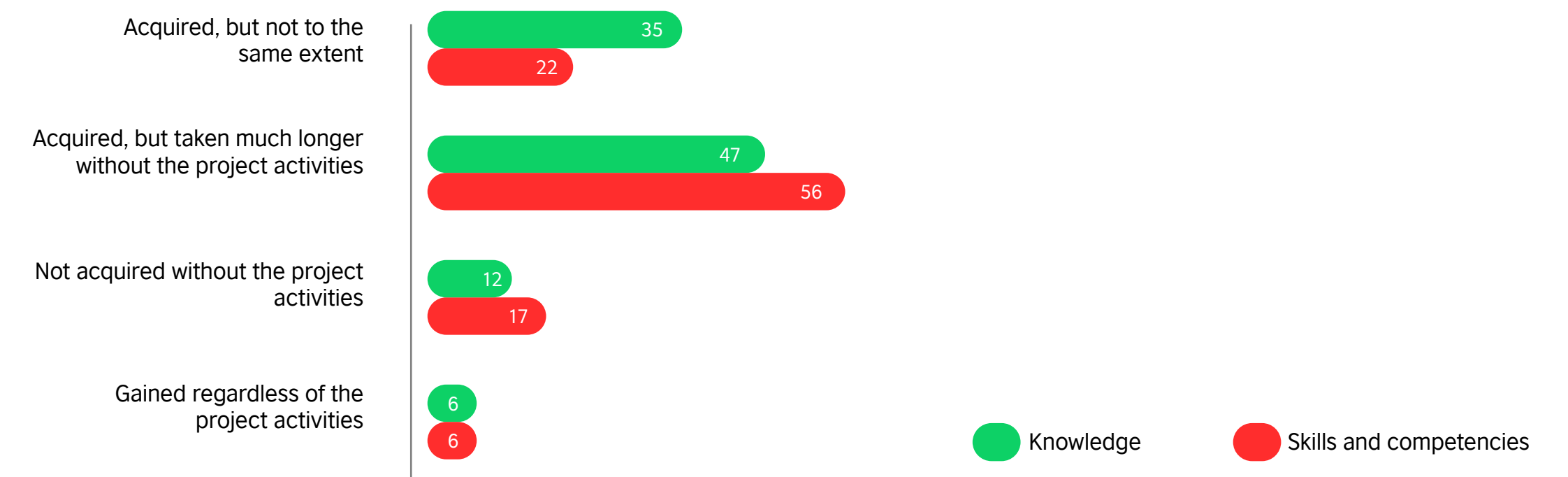
Prior to participating in the programme, participants were mixed on whether or not they had confidence in their festival's future – 8 agreed or strongly agreed (47%), 5 were neutral (29%) and 3 disagreed (24%) – suggesting the level of need for the programme as a capacity building opportunity is varied. Moving forward there may be benefits in providing specific training that focuses on future security and continuity more broadly, either as part of this programme or, depending on need, as a supplementary programme. In addition to providing support in relation to the environmental sustainability of festivals, this could also explore those areas highlighted by festivals as factors impacting their potential longevity and/or motivations for engaging with the programme, including financial management, organisational resilience, and advocacy with government bodies.

### Contribution of Circular Culture to skills and knowledge acquisition

Whilst nearly all participants felt that they would have gained the knowledge they learnt through Circular Culture, they were most likely to say that it would have taken much longer without the programme (8 / 47%) or not on the same scale (6 / 35%).

Similarly, when asked about the skills and competencies that they gained through the programme, slightly more than half of the respondents said that they would have acquired some of the skills, but it would have taken much longer without the project activities (10 / 55%). Three of the respondents to this question felt that they would not have acquired any of the skills or competencies without the project activities.

Figure 6: Proportion of respondents identifying that they would have acquired knowledge or skills and competencies without participating in the Circular Culture programme



When assessing the level of contribution that the Circular Culture programme has made towards increasing skills and practice, participants were most likely to report it had made some contribution (12 respondents, 57%) and nearly all respondents (18 / 86%) felt that Circular Culture made some contribution or a major contribution to increasing their understanding of sustainability. The remaining three respondents (14%) described the contribution as minor. When asked in the survey to reflect on the specific skills, competencies, and knowledge that were gained through participating in the programme, responses largely fell into four key areas: understanding and implementing sustainability practices; strategic planning and management; accessibility and inclusion; and collaboration and networking. Respondents were purposefully asked broad and open questions about capacity building elements of the programme (e.g. “what knowledge have you gained that you didn’t have before participating in Circular Culture?”) and so there is no specific prioritisation of the four areas, as each had different resonance for different participants.

### Understanding and implementing sustainability practices

Participants described developing a greater understanding of the importance of reducing environmental impact. They also spoke about sharing this further by raising awareness in their wider festival teams about the importance of sustainability practices.

At a delivery level, festivals spoke about better understanding how to adapt their operations to include sustainable practices, including gaining technical expertise in the implementation of these practices and new and emerging sustainable technologies. For example, one festival discussed implementing waste management protocols and exploring sustainable alternatives for materials and lighting. Others focussed on how to have more efficient energy use and ways to avoid pollution during festival operations. Across the board, festivals placed an emphasis on having learnt practices that can help to reduce their negative impacts.

Additionally, festivals valued the ongoing process of learning, adapting, and implementing new sustainability practices provided by Circular Culture, and noted that engaging with training programmes of this sort helps them evolve their sustainability practices and maintain a forward-thinking approach.

### Accessibility and inclusion

A number of festivals spoke about how learning more about addressing climate change highlighted a need for festivals to be more inclusive and accessible, ensuring that sustainability efforts can consider the diverse needs and perspectives of different audience members.

In particular, festivals spoke about learning more about accessibility from a practical perspective, and how they could improve access across their festival venues. This included

considering how to make sure venues were accessible for people with disabilities and including online programming to make sure that those who cannot attend can still be included.

*“The discussions on inclusion were very important. We are already a festival run by women and LGBTQIA+ people, but after Circular Culture we’ve improved access for disabled people”*

*Circular Culture participant, Argentina*

### Collaboration and networking:

Participants place a strong value on working together, sharing experiences, and fostering community development through the programme. The importance of collaboration both within the festival community and with external partners was highlighted as a key learning from the programme.

Festivals felt that through the programme they better understood the conceptual and practical benefits of international exchange. They spoke about understanding more about how these exchanges can enrich the participant experience, and how practically to strengthen international links and collaborations, for example by bringing in international artists. Some festivals also indicated that they had activated new networks focused on ecological issues as a result of participating in Circular Culture, with respondents from Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Cuba all reflecting on the strengthened networks they had developed through the programme.

*“The work we’ve done together here has been incredible and we’ve been able to activate other networks and people in a really special shared project, so I believe that would be the great power of Cultura Circular, to have provided these meetings and exchanges, with ecological issues as a motive.”*

*Circular Culture participant, Brazil*

### Strategic Planning and Management:

Alongside the practical, operational learnings that festivals developed, festivals also spoke about developing complementary management strategies for sustainability. This came from both the perspective of the need for building a comprehensive sustainability policy for their festival operations and from recognising the broader impact of festival management on planetary sustainability (explored further below).

Participants noted that the Circular Culture programme gave them the opportunity to engage in critical analysis of their strategic planning, and the space and capacity to think of innovative, sustainable solutions.

*“The focus on sustainability drove the search for innovative and creative solutions to integrate responsible practices into the festival, enriching our offer and leading us to new artistic proposals. In addition, participation in the programme helped us to comply with sustainability regulations and requirements, which is increasingly valued by sponsors, institutions and partners”*

*Circular Culture participant, Argentina*

*“On a daily basis we have strengthened our commitment to sustainability and environmental values at the festival.”*

*Circular Culture participant, Peru*

*“[We have seen] increased public attention and knowledge that the festival is a catalyst for ecological agendas and reflections”*

*Circular Culture participant, Brazil*

## The role of cultural events in broader sustainable practice

Beyond implementing sustainable practices in their own organisations, festivals recognised the role that they have to play in contributing to cultural change and mentalities around sustainable practice. Festivals see their role not just in environmental terms but also in shaping cultural and social attitudes towards sustainability. This role for festivals also has direct links with a series of outcomes identified in the British Council’s overarching Theory of Change. These are also represented in the Theory of Change for Circular Culture (see Appendix 1) and in particular this contributes to intermediate outcomes related to responding to global challenges and the value of arts and culture in a sustainable development context to address these challenges.

More broadly, through developing their understanding of sustainable practices, festivals felt better able to make a commitment to integrating sustainability into daily operations and long-term planning. This includes adopting better planning practices and making conscious decisions that reflect a commitment to environmental stewardship. Additionally, at a technical level, festivals spoke about better understanding their carbon footprint and potential strategies they could implement to reduce their waste.

### Increasing awareness of environmental issues in audiences

Through the open text responses in the survey, participants spoke about the importance of developing mechanisms to change behaviour and promote sustainable practices through effective communication strategies. Festivals that engaged with the programme have seen an increase in educational initiatives aimed at both their participants and the broader community. Specific examples included: providing workshops and activities around the theme of sustainability within festival programming; moving to paperless programming; and encouraging sustainable practices in attendees, such as providing free water stations and asking attendees to bring their own containers rather than selling water on site.

For Festival Mar del Plata, a film festival based in Argentina, the training was a game changing process. Before participating in the Circular Culture workshops, they believed their festival was already sustainable, but soon realised they had a lot to do to really become sustainable. The educational element was invaluable, and they are now passionate about sharing their learnings further.

With increased awareness, festivals can now position themselves as pioneers in regional sustainability. This shift is not solely about adopting green practices but also about creating a culture of environmental consciousness that resonated with attendees and has a knock-on effect for an individual. For instance, during Se Rasgum, a music festival located in Brazil, there was a small setup where groups engaged with attendees, asking questions to calculate each person’s carbon footprint, and provided suggestions on how to offset that impact. By integrating sustainability into their core mission, festivals have become beacons of ecological responsibility in their respective regions.

## Festival Internacional de Cine de Mar del Plata Mar del Plata, Argentina



Festival Internacional de Cine de Mar del Plata is Argentina's oldest and most prestigious film event. Over 10 days, the festival attracts approximately 350,000 attendees who watch over 300 film screenings in 15 cinemas.

Participation in Circular Culture prompted the Mar del Plata Festival to adopt several sustainability practices that included:

- **Mobility:** The festival organisers reduced the environmental impact of ground travel by implementing a bus system to transport attendees from Buenos Aires airport to Mar del Plata, minimising car trips and reducing carbon emissions.
- **Paperless Operations:** Since 2022, the festival has transitioned to digital programmes and credentials, significantly cutting down on paper use. Festival signage is now made from durable materials for reuse in future editions.
- **Digital Communication:** The festival reduced paper consumption by over 50% by leveraging social media and movie screens to disseminate information about the event and film screenings.
- **Local Hiring:** In response to Circular Culture guidelines, the festival began hiring local workers in Mar del Plata for various services, rather than bringing the entire production team from Buenos Aires, promoting local economic engagement and reducing travel-related emissions.

# Opportunities for further learning

Participants were asked to reflect on additional topics that they would have liked to explore through the programme to inform future development of Circular Culture. Key topics included:

- **Tailoring content to the specific needs of participating festivals**

The festivals engaging in Circular Culture range from large to small, cover a variety of different artforms, and experience different geographic contexts. Across the recommendations, festivals highlighted the need for training that could align to the specific needs resulting from these individual contexts, potentially through the development of a 'pick your own' suite of content that can ensure relevance, avoiding a 'one size fits all' approach.

Specific examples given included the need for support for: festivals with scarce resources; small and/or emerging festivals, particularly in economically challenging regions; and specific art forms e.g. film and audiovisual festivals.

Additionally suggestions were made to provide support for connecting festivals with other projects and artists, particularly from the UK or similar contexts, and to include case studies and examples from Latin American festivals to make the training more relevant for participants from this region.

- **Sustainability in Practice**

Festivals are keen to learn more about practical strategies for implementing sustainability, particularly in circumstances where a festival does not own its venue and/or has limited resources. Alongside this, training on responsible production and consumption practices that is tailored to festival context, and training that focuses on the social impact festivals can make – including community engagement, and wider impacts on fair labour practices – were seen as beneficial areas.

- **Financial and Resource Management**

There were two key aspects of financial and resource management where festivals felt they could benefit from additional training. The first was guidance on accessing financial, technical, logistical, and human resources, with a focus on sustainability and social impact. Secondly, festivals wanted more information on, and strategies for creating stable and sustainable collaborations, including co-financing partnerships and partnerships with other projects.

- **Measurement and Impact Tracking**

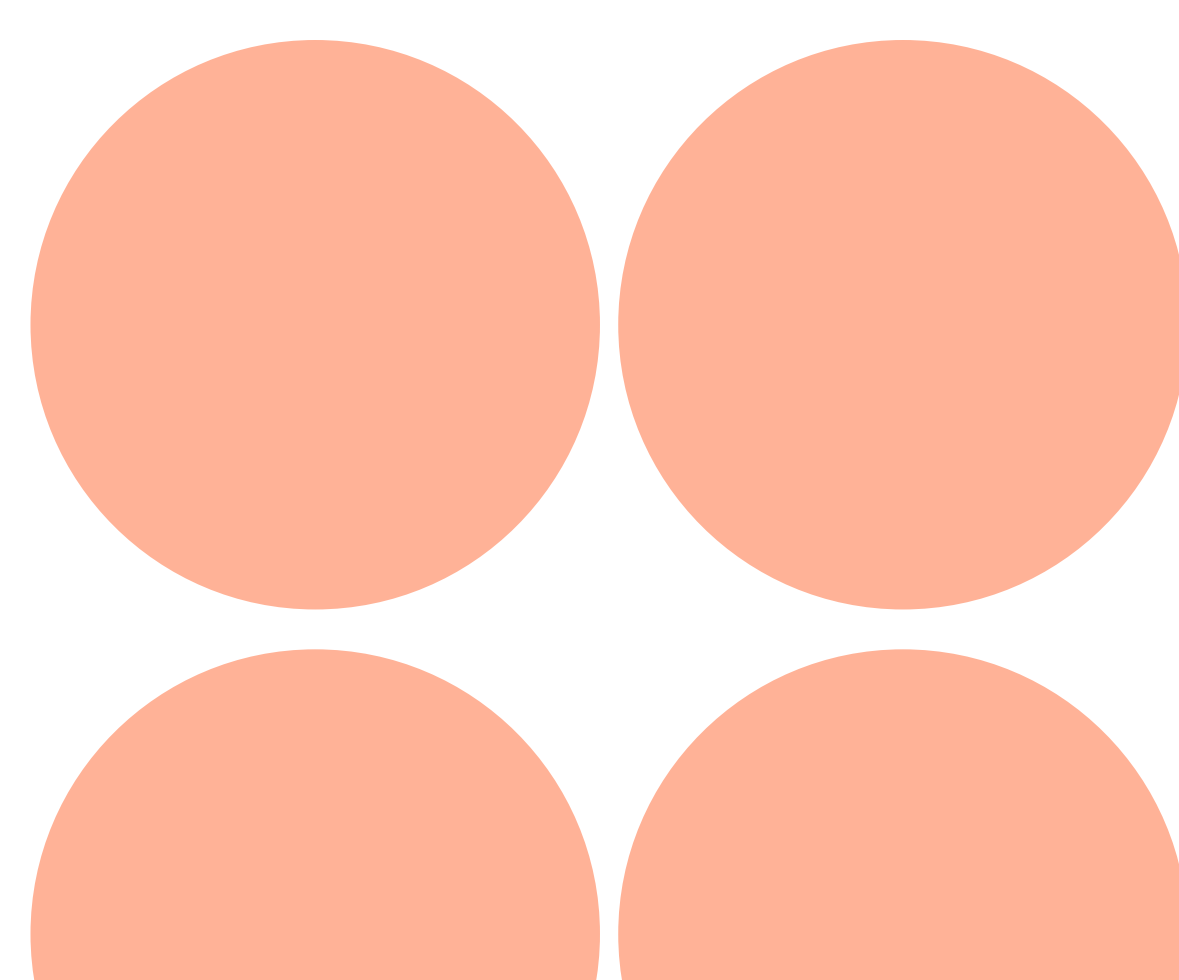
Alongside the training provided, festivals wanted specific training on how to measure and reduce their festival's carbon footprint. They were also interested in understanding and developing formats and tools for tracking sustainability metrics more widely. One possible approach to this could be through adapting the role of Julie's Bicycle within the delivery model for Circular Culture and working with them to explore how their existing tools, such as the Creative Climate Tools and the Future Festival Tools, can be embedded in organisations. Alternatively, this could provide an opportunity for further partnerships with other organisations to support with developing festivals' technical understanding of sustainability metrics tracking.

- **Communication and Awareness**

As well as benefitting from learning about how to implement sustainable practices, festivals identified the potential benefit in a topic that supports how to communicate effectively about sustainability. This was both in terms of effectively promoting sustainability efforts within their festival and to the public more widely.

Alongside this, there was an appetite for an increase in more critical, macro-level discussions around climate change to better understand the broader context and implications, which in turn can support festivals own communication about the climate crisis.

In addition, festivals were keen to be able to access more generalised support following on from their involvement with the programme. Particular examples included having access to expert advice and resources tailored to individual festival needs that could be referred back to once they were no longer participating in the training.



## Sustainability metrics

### Key Findings

- Participating in Circular Culture has significantly increased environmental awareness among festival organisers and attendees with sustainability being integrated into festival programming.
- Circular Culture has facilitated improvements in festival operations, such as waste management and energy-efficient practices.
- Festivals continue to face challenges related to financial and resource limitations, particularly in implementing more extensive sustainability measures.
- Several festivals have reported increased and/or diversified audiences as a result of implementing sustainability initiatives following participation in Circular Culture.

This chapter explores the tangible improvements observed among festival participants and examines how their involvement in Circular Culture has altered their approaches to sustainability.

## Operational and logistical enhancements

As explored above, prior to their involvement with the programme, many festivals operated with a limited understanding of how sustainability could be embedded into their logistical processes. Circular Culture provided crucial insights and resources that helped festivals reevaluate and enhance their operational practices.

Key improvements include the adoption of advanced facilities such as dry toilets and a more thoughtful inclusion of sustainability in logistical planning. Festivals now approach their planning with a greater awareness of environmental impacts, from waste management to energy

consumption. This strategic integration of sustainability into every operational aspect reflects a deeper commitment to reducing their ecological footprint.

For Se Rasgum festival, the main impact of participating was enhancing sustainability initiatives that were already planned, but with additional resources, gained greater scale and intensity.

*“This greatly helped the festival to become a reference not only for the audience but also for other festivals in Belém”*  
*Circular Culture participant, Brazil*

## Environmental impact

A significant impact coming out of Circular Culture is the reduction in environmental footprint achieved by participating festivals. Through open text responses in the survey, festivals shared that as a result of participating in the programme they have adopted a variety of sustainability practices. In most cases this was related to waste management for example by implementing measures such as waste separation stations. Others reported making use of mechanisms such as energy-efficient technologies and hybrid event formats in a bid to minimise their environmental impact. For example, BitBang in Argentina highlighted that as a result of participating in Circular Culture they had made the decision to increase their online activities, leading to a reduction in their climate footprint through both fewer physical audiences and being able to facilitate international speakers through virtual talks.

Meanwhile, analysis carried out by Julie’s Bicycle following the delivery of training sessions shows that the main areas that respondents have committed to making improvements include increasing public and audience engagement (13 respondents, 43%) and improving waste management and reducing the amount of waste generated (12 respondents, 40%). The full list of commitments is provided in Table 8 below.

Table 8: “Which environmental areas/initiatives are you committed to improve in future editions of the Festival (choose one or two areas you would like to focus on)” (n=30)

Answer choices	% respondents	No respondents
Working with suppliers in the value chain to improve the supply of sustainable products and services	13%	4
Energy efficiency measures	27%	8
Circular models and materials	10%	3
Improving waste management and reducing the amount of waste generated	40%	12
Sustainable and ethical food	0%	0
Increasing public and audience engagement	43%	13
Provide specific training for staff	30%	9
Offer specific training / programming to audience	7%	2
Increase artist engagement	10%	3
Improving biodiversity and green space infrastructure	3%	1
Sustainable transport	3%	1
Environmental and climate justice	0%	0
Other (please specify)	7%	2

Source: Julie’s Bicycle

The commitment to reducing waste and exploring alternatives to physical travel—such as virtual engagements—demonstrates a proactive approach to reducing the ecological footprint. Festival Estereo Picnic in Colombia, has become the first zero-waste-to-landfill event in the Andean region, something they feel was only achieved as a result of participating in Circular Culture. This, and other examples of festivals embracing best practice through the skills and knowledge gained on the programme serves as exemplary models of how dedication to sustainability can yield favourable results. This in turn can provide opportunities to encourage other festivals to embrace sustainability measures through tangible examples of sustainability in practice.

*“The message was to do something, even little changes can have a big impact.”  
Circular Culture participant, Mexico*

### Uncertainty and challenges

Despite the significant benefits of implementing sustainability measures, some festivals face ongoing challenges related to financial constraints and resource limitations. Additionally broader contextual issues such as fluctuating government policies and reduced public support impact the ability of festivals to fully implement or expand their sustainability initiatives.

Across responding festivals, the potential issues faced by festivals were multifaceted and interdependent. For example, as an international film festival, Mar del Plata in Argentina hosts over 300,000 guests annually. This creates challenges in managing flight-related carbon emissions due to its international status alongside on-the-ground operational issues like waste and plastic disposal. Meanwhile, Se Rasgum struggles with the “Amazonian cost,” due to its remote location far from major Brazilian centres. This results in a scarcity of crucial suppliers, such as for non-chemical toilets and glass recyclers, and higher costs, including environmental impact, due to long flights needed to bring in artists.

Festivals have acknowledged these challenges and continue to use the learnings from Circular Culture and beyond to seek ways to address them. For instance, some festivals spoke about exploring creative solutions to manage waste and carbon emissions, while others have considered how to reconcile the financial implications of implementing more extensive sustainability measures. The dialogue initiated by the Circular Culture programme has encouraged festivals to address these challenges with renewed efforts and innovative approaches.

In one example, a participating festival faced a dilemma regarding the use of plates and cups due to local water scarcity. In a previous edition, ceramic plates were used, washed, and reused – thus minimising waste – but this was not feasible in a village where water was scarce. To avoid taking water away from the local population, the Circular Culture team recommended switching to plates made from recyclable materials like cardboard. This was successfully implemented, and for drinking water, the staff used eco-friendly mugs made from wheat, addressing both environmental concerns and local resource limitations. By considering the nuance of different sustainability measures and responding to the individual context of the festival, Circular Culture was able to support more sympathetic and balanced decision making in relation to sustainable practice.

## Audience expansion and diversification

Whilst not a direct target of the Circular Culture programme, several festivals noted in open text responses that they had seen an expansion and diversification of festival audiences as a result of implementing new initiatives following participation in Circular Culture. By embracing sustainable practices and promoting inclusive initiatives, festivals have been able to attract new generations and a wider array of attendees, with six respondents explicitly mentioning this as a measurable improvement in open text survey responses (38%). This inclusivity is reflected not only in the demographic diversity of festival-goers but also in the varied programming they have been able to offer, which has appeal for a broader audience.

*“We have gained other audiences that we did have not before.”  
Circular Culture participant, Cuba*

## FIL Niños Guadalajara, México



FIL Niños is the largest book gathering in Ibero-America. Held over nine days, the fair attracts a diverse audience, including book editors, publishing teams, writers, journalists, and the general public.

Since participating in the Circular Culture Programme in 2022, FIL Niños has gained greater autonomy in implementing sustainable practices. The financial backing from the programme allowed them to pursue these initiatives without requiring board approval, enabling more proactive and independent decision-making regarding sustainability in the Children's Pavilion.

Most notably, in 2023 the grant from the British Council was utilised to create a comprehensive 'Manual for Managing Sustainable Festivals' in collaboration with Syntiro Associates from the United Kingdom. The manual provided a structured approach to sustainability, offering guidelines such as forming a dedicated sustainability team, organising regular meetings, updating processes and documentation, developing policies and action plans, empowering and training staff, hiring local service providers, recording carbon emissions and water usage, launching communication campaigns, and monitoring and reporting on sustainability metrics.

The manual's implementation showed that FIL Niños left a total carbon footprint of 312.66 tons and consumed 741.42 cubic meters of water, emphasising the environmental impact of the event and the importance of ongoing sustainability efforts.

# Stakeholder engagement

## Key Findings

- Circular Culture enabled nearly all of participating festivals to connect with UK-based artists overcoming previous engagement barriers such as budget limitations.
- Grant were primarily used to support British artist participation, resulting in impactful connections focused on knowledge sharing, sustainability, and mentorship.
- Direct collaboration with UK artists helped most festivals gain a stronger understanding of UK values and professional sustainability standards.
- Working with the British Council is seen as enhancing credibility and positively impacting future international funding opportunities.

This chapter looks at how stakeholder engagement has strengthened the credibility and responsibility of the festivals. It also examines the impacts of these collaborations on festivals practices in promoting sustainability.

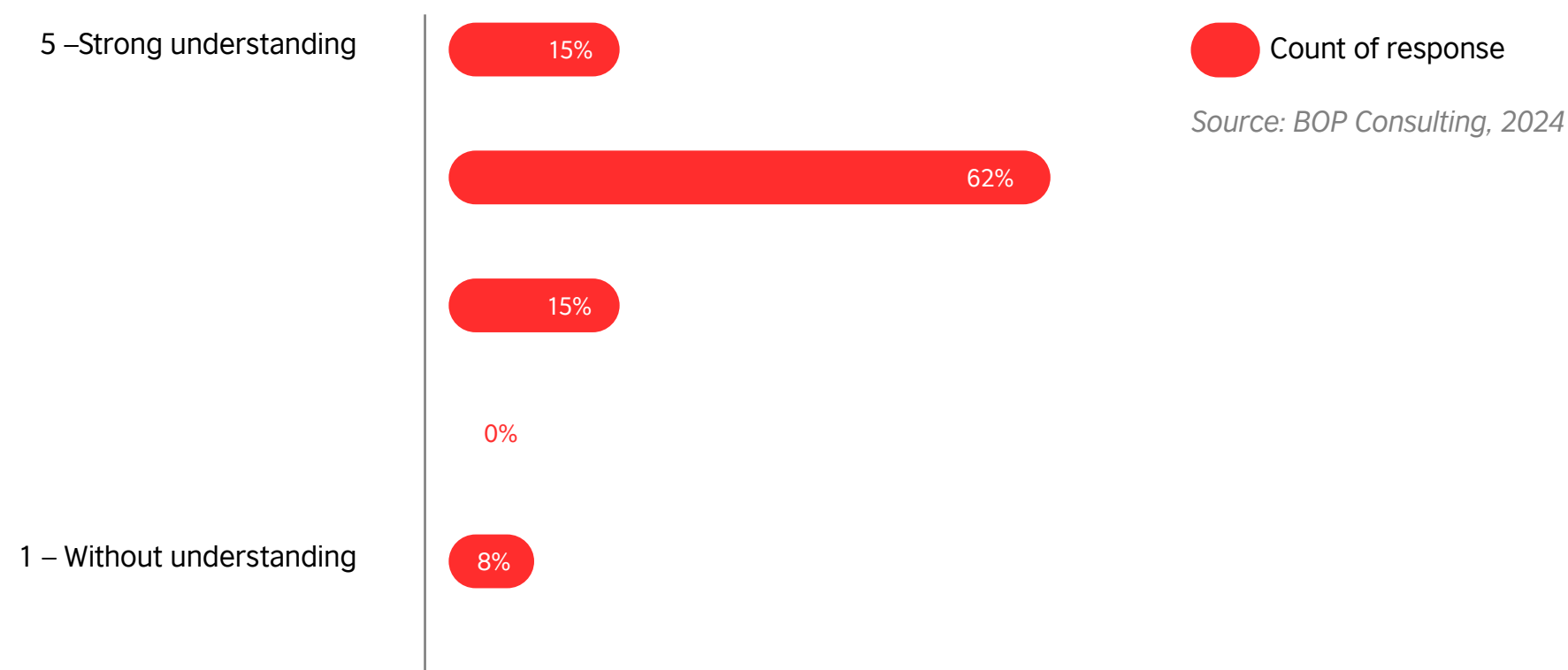
# Engaging with UK artists

Central to the programme is a grant to enable connections with the UK. There was a broadly even split between the festivals who had and had not engaged with UK based artists and creative professionals before participating in Circular Culture (7 no (43%), 9 yes (56%)). All respondents barring one engaged with a UK based artist / creative professional as part of Circular Culture.

Where festivals had not previously engaged with UK based artists and creatives, this was due to a combination of a lack of support, a lack of budget, and not previously feeling that UK based artists and professionals were the right fit for the content of their festival.

Most respondents felt that they had a good or strong understanding of UK values and standards as a result of participating in Circular Culture, likely as a direct result of the engagements that they were able to make with UK based artists through the programme.

Figure 7: Respondents level of agreement to the extent they understand UK values and standards after participating in Circular Culture



The grant funds provided through Circular Culture were used almost exclusively for facilitating British artists to engage with festivals, usually through funding travel costs and artists fees with festivals highlighting a broad range of different types of engagement with UK artist and creative professionals across the programme.

Notable examples of engagements with UK artists included:

- The development of a ‘bridge’ partnership between an Argentinian artist and a British musician that was very highly praised by the festival organiser
- A week-long exchange between British and local artists that had a specific focus on sustainable practice in the use of materials

*“They were very much into the idea of buying materials to make art, and the British artists suggested to them to use things they already have. So, this makes us rethink our daily practice. It has a lasting effect. And we could never have brought these artists if it weren’t for British Council’s support.”*

*Circular Culture participant, Brazil*

- Two musicians from the UK who worked with local artists and music producers for a week, leading mentorship sessions that provide practical guidance for those working in the music industry that covered technical topics as well as aspects of artistic careers and the development of musical projects at the local level.

*“It was important because, on one hand, they introduced the youth to a new musical proposal during the workshops. On the other hand, they exposed the audience and the city to a rhythm that is not very common. This supported our idea of connecting [our musical heritage] with the rest of the world”*

*Circular Culture participant, Colombia*

- Collaborative exchange between a British singer and Venezuelan performers who sought to build a sustainable experience from what they could do in the country.

*“The were very open to work with local artists that have done some audiovisual artistic interventions that could be projected while he was singing.”*

*Circular Culture participant, Venezuela*

## Disonarte Ibagué, Colombia



Disonarte, a two-day music festival in Ibagué, Colombia, used its grant to support an artistic residency for British DJ and percussionist Obeka, based in Manchester, UK. Obeka performed on the festival's main stage and collaborated with artists from Ibagué and Chile to co-write a song. His involvement also included leading workshops, labs with local musicians, and discussions about the music industry.

Festival Director Yeison Gómez highlighted the value of Obeka's visit, noting that his diverse musical background brought fresh perspectives to local musicians.

*"He comes from different musical backgrounds and has other points of view. It was very good to be able to put him in touch with the youngsters here."*

The collaborative song, recorded in Ibagué, connected the festival to European music markets, potentially creating new opportunities for local artists and building long-term international connections.

### Working with the British Council

Amongst participants there was a 3:5 ratio of those who had, and those who had not, participated in a British Council initiative before participating in Circular Culture. Anecdotally, there were a range of perceived benefits from being involved with a British Council programme, most specifically a perception that it increases the credibility of a festival to have received British Council funding. This was felt at both a national and international level and was also perceived to have a knock-on positive impact on future fund applications with other international funders (explored further in the chapter 'Longevity and replicability').

*"Being associated with an organization like the British Council gives the festival a lot of credibility in the Mexican cultural arena", Circular Culture participant, Mexico*

# Longevity and replicability

## Key Findings

- Following participation in Circular Culture, festivals are committed to applying their learnings to support their long term growth and sustainability.
- Participating has positively influenced the public image and positioning of many festivals in turn strengthening their ability to attract more investment.
- Circular Culture's strength lies in its adaptability, making it well-suited for other cultural sectors with established frameworks such as museums and opera.

This chapter evaluates Circular Culture's impact on the sustainability of festivals, exploring its applicability across various cultural sectors. It also assesses the perceived attractiveness of investing in these festivals post-participation.

# Commitment to continuity

Circular Culture has provided festivals with the knowledge necessary to implement sustainable practices, supporting their long-term goals. This continuity is crucial not only for the festivals themselves but also for the broader cultural landscape, ensuring that sustainability remains a key focus in future cultural events.

The sustainability practices adopted as a result of participating in the programme has reinforced a commitment from many festivals to continue their operations for years to come. Festivals have expressed a desire to integrate these practices into their annual events, with a hope that doing so will contribute to their long-term viability.

## Barulhinho Delas Fortaleza, Brasil



Barulhinho Delas is a music festival centred around the involvement and empowerment of women, including cisgender, transgender, indigenous, elderly women, and women with disabilities.

As the festival organisers sought to increase female participation, they identified a gap in the availability of skilled women for certain roles. To address this, the Barulhinho Delas festival introduced a series of training workshops designed to equip women with the skills necessary to contribute to cultural production. In 2024, these workshops spanned 180 hours and covered a wide range of topics, including cultural production, project development, photography, sound engineering, and lighting.

The majority of these workshops were led by women, ensuring that participants not only learned technical skills but also engaged with female role models in the industry.

## Festival image and positioning

Participating in Circular Culture has positively influenced the public image and positioning of many festivals. Festivals that have integrated sustainable practices into their operations are increasingly viewed as platforms for ecological reflection and progressive agendas. This enhanced image not only attracts environmentally conscious attendees but also garners support from new partners and sponsors.

Participating festivals felt that Circular Culture had:

- Provided endorsement for their festival from the British Council, a well respected organisation, which can be crucial for attracting new investors and gaining credibility for the festival.

- Helped them to focus on seeking out companies and investors that align with their own values such as promoting the circular economy and sustainability.
- Enhanced festivals' profile and perceived effectiveness through the exchanges with international artists and foundations, with particular value and emphasis placed on exchanges with the United Kingdom.
- Supported the development of new alliances and networks with artists, institutions, and other festivals. These have opened opportunities for joint projects and strengthened connections within the cultural sector.

For instance, Festival Disonarte's involvement in the programme also served as a catalyst for engaging the private sector and local government in environmental initiatives. As the first festival in Ibagué to prioritise sustainability, Disonarte has set a precedent for other events in the city, particularly in light of Ibagué's designation as a UNESCO Creative City. By incorporating environmental issues into its agenda, the festival has not only opened new narratives but also aims to gain economic momentum and reduce its ecological footprint.

### Attracting investment

When asked if participating in Circular Culture enhanced festivals ability to attract investment, (37.5%) 6 survey respondents answered 'yes' suggesting a positive impact, especially for festivals with organisational structures or strategic alignment to capitalise on investment opportunities effectively. Respondent who gave this score identified several themes:

#### 1. Credibility:

The endorsement from the British Council and collaboration with international artists has helped festivals gain credibility, making them more attractive to new investors.

*"Having participated in the Circular Culture program has given us very good visibility and has generated confidence to get new partners."*

*Circular Culture participant, Argentina*

## 2. New Opportunities:

Participation has provided fresh insights into the available support and investment opportunities in the region.

*"[Before participating] we had explored very little in this field. We had very little information about the support we can receive from other countries."*

*Circular Culture participant, Cuba*

## 3. Cultural and Social Impact:

Enhanced sustainability practices have not only improved festival operations but also attracted new partners and supporters (specific data on the nature of these partnerships has not been shared). Festival are being recognised for their positive impact on communities, showcasing their role in sustainable development.

*"[Our participation] has created interest and demonstrated our impact on the community."*

*Circular Culture participant, Cuba*

For respondents who answered, 'I don't know', this response may indicate a gap in measuring their investment readiness or limitations tied to the timeframe of this evaluation.

Table 9: Festival participants ability to attract investment as a result of Circular Culture

Increased ability to attract investment	Count of responses
Yes	6
No	3
I don't know	7

# Replicability

One of Circular Culture's key strengths is its adaptable design, making it well-suited for replication across other cultural sectors with established frameworks. The lead training curator at Julie's Bicycle echoed this sentiment, noting that sectors like the opera, which have strong connections across the UK and North and South America, could easily integrate similar training to enhance sustainability, building cross-regional connections, and strengthen long-term viability. By leveraging existing networks found in cultural institutions such as museums, given their role as community hubs, the model can efficiently propagate its principles and promote sustainable practices across various cultural sectors.

# Lessons learned and recommendations

This chapter highlights the key lessons learned from our research on the effectiveness of the Circular Culture programme. It includes recommendations that have been grouped into thematic areas to highlight the insights gained and to provide actionable suggestions for improving the programme.

# Lessons learned

Across the research, it can be seen that Circular Culture is making a positive impact on the festivals taking part in the programme. Festivals are increasing their knowledge, skills, and capacity in relation to sustainable practices, which is having tangible impacts on the delivery of their events. Participants also gain broader knowledge and learning around collaboration and networking which helps to provide further opportunities for enhancing their offer.

The grant funding provided through the programme is vital and is facilitating festivals to engage in new and innovative collaborations with artists and creative practitioners from the UK. These collaborations are having an impact on professionals in the Americas and on audiences, who are able to experience a broader range of cultural offerings than might otherwise be possible, as well as providing UK artists with exposure to new audiences and new international markets. However, the positive benefits of these collaborations is, for some festivals, marred when the financial costs arising from this exchange go above and beyond the value of the grant awarded. This was particularly an issue for smaller festivals who do not necessarily have the reserves available to easily make up any additional expenses incurred (e.g. for flight tickets).

As a programme grounded in sustainable practice, Circular Culture has strong relevance and resonance with the participating festivals. It is pertinent to note that whilst many respondents felt that they had a prior understanding of the importance of sustainable practices, very few were able to put these into practice, demonstrating the need for a programme such as this that can bridge the gap between awareness and action.

There are a series of key themes that emerge when considering how to apply the lessons from this evaluation to future editions of the programme, both in its current format and if it were to be extended globally, which are explored in more detail below. Chief amongst these is a recognition that for Circular Culture to make a longer-term difference to the sustainable practices of festivals, it needs to be a sustained intervention that can support festivals in the longer term. Whilst the benefits of the programme have been evidenced through this evaluation, they are likely to fall away swiftly without continued support for instigating best practice.

## Long term support and economic resources

Sustainable impact requires consistent and long-term financial support. Many festivals struggled with the timing and amount of funding, which led to logistical challenges and limited the scope of their activities.

## Recommendations:

### 1. Extend economic support:

Increase and extend economic support to ensure the long-term sustainability of festivals. Funding should be disbursed earlier to allow for proper planning, particularly regarding travel arrangements for international artists.

### 2. Flexible funding models:

Implement a tiered funding approach based on the size and specific needs of each festival. This would help address the diverse challenges faced by different types of festivals, particularly those in remote or economically disadvantaged areas.

### 3. Funding for sustainable initiatives:

Festivals highly valued the exchange opportunities provided by funding, however as a programme with a focus on sustainable practices some festivals would benefit from funding for implementing those practices. This could either be in addition to or instead of exchange funding dependent on festival need.

## Personalised and specialised support

Festivals vary greatly in terms of scale, theme, and location, necessitating a more tailored approach to support.

## Recommendations:

### 1. Incubator-style support:

Provide more personalised, incubator-style assistance to festivals, focusing on their unique challenges and opportunities. This could include one-on-one mentoring, customised training sessions, and specialised resources.

### 2. Context-specific training:

Tailor training sessions to the specific contexts of different regions and types of festivals. Smaller festivals, for example, might benefit from content focused on low-budget sustainability initiatives, while larger events might require guidance on managing complex logistics.

## Regional collaboration

Effective communication and collaboration between festivals and support institutions are crucial for sharing best practices and promoting innovation.

### Recommendations:

#### 1. Strengthen institutional connections:

Improve communication channels between festivals and support networks, including the British Council and local partners. This could involve regular check-ins, dedicated support contacts, and the establishment of collaborative platforms for knowledge exchange.

#### 2. Facilitate inter-festival collaboration:

Create opportunities for festivals to collaborate and share experiences, such as through joint projects, co-hosted events, or exchange programmes. A monthly newsletter highlighting activities and innovations from different festivals could also create a sense of shared purpose.

## Training and capacity building

Training sessions need to be relevant, practical, and followed up with actions that reinforce the lessons learned.

### Recommendations:

#### 1. Contextualised training:

Ensure that training content is relevant to the specific needs and contexts of participating festivals. Smaller festivals, for example, may require different training than larger, more established events.

#### 2. Post-training follow-up:

Implement follow-up actions post-training to maintain momentum. This could include check-ins, additional training sessions, or collaborative projects that build on the initial training. There may also be benefit in helping participating festivals to sustain and build the networks that they create through the programme, strengthening both local and international festival relations.

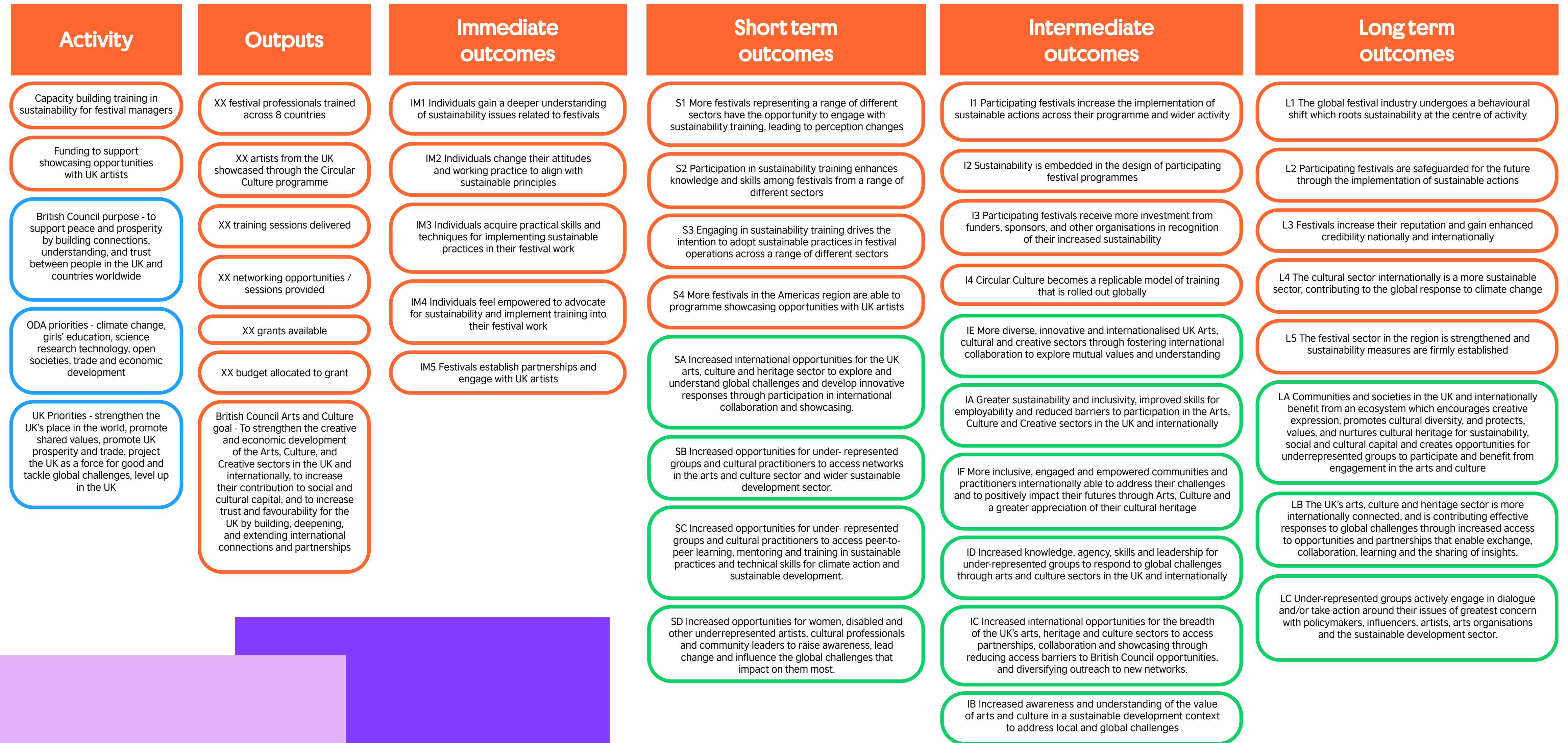
## Process recommendations

In addition to the recommendations derived from the lessons learned, there are also a series of process recommendations that have been highlighted through the evaluation which may help with both the development of the programme and any future evaluations of the programme.

- **Uniform selection process:** a scoring matrix was developed for assessing applications to Circular Culture however through the research it appears only two countries used this. Ensuring all participating country teams have access to the matrix and have been briefed in how to use it will increase transparency of decision making and ensure consistency in the selection process across the Americas. Relatedly, there may also be value in having a regional level review of completed matrices for quality assurance and scrutiny before final awards are made.
- **Centralisation of stakeholder contacts:** The evaluation was unable to explore the impact of the programme more widely due to a lack of availability of contact lists for relevant stakeholders. Exploring mechanisms for having a centrally consolidated list of stakeholders could mitigate this and enable wider exploration of the programme's impact, especially as it becomes more established.
- **Mandatory monitoring and evaluation participation:** A large proportion of grantees and beneficiaries did not participate in the research leading to limitations in the data. Including a requirement to participate in any monitoring and evaluation within grant agreements can help to improve uptake. However consideration should be given to whether such a condition is appropriate for this programme. Should it be deemed appropriate, care should be taken around the wording of any such condition, including considering time limitations on participating in research as well as whether proportionate penalties are even possible for those who do not comply with such a requirement.

# Appendix 1: Theory of Change for Circular Culture

Figure 8: Theory of Change for Circular Culture



# Appendix 2: Interviews with Circular Culture beneficiaries

Table 10: Participating festivals interviewed

Festival	Country	City (State)	Art Form
Bitbang	Argentina	Buenos Aires	Videogames and animation
Ranchar	Argentina	Buenos Aires	Music
Festival cine Mar del Plata	Argentina	Mar del Plata	Film
Afropunk	Brazil	Salvador	Music
Se Rasgum	Brazil	Belém	Music / visual arts
Barulhinho Delas	Brazil	Fortaleza	Multidisciplinary
Festival Detonante	Colombia	Quibdó	Multidisciplinary / Music - Dance - Entrepreneurship
Festival Estereo Picnic	Colombia	Bogotá	Music
FICCI (Festival De Cine de Cartagena)	Colombia	Cartagena	Film
Festival Disonarte	Colombia	Ibagué	Music / Entrepreneurship

Festival	Country	City (State)	Art Form
Eco Manigua: Encuentro de Infancia, Economía Circular y Arte	Cuba	Havana	Artes visuales/Visual Arts
FICUNAM	México	CDMX	Film
Feria Internacional del Libro Guadalajara (FIL Niños)	México	Jalisco	Editorial
AXE Ceremonia 2024	México	CDMX	Music
Festival Artístico Audiovisual Afrodescendencias	México	Oaxaca, Guerrero	Multidisciplinary
Mar, Conciencia y Soundsystem	Perú	Lima	Music
Festival Selvamonos	Perú	Oxapampa	Music
COCO Dance Festival	Trinidad	Port of Spain	Dance
Salsa Fiesta	Trinidad	Port of Spain	Dance
Festival Ascenso	Venezuela	Caracas	Film, photography and video
Apamate Fest	Venezuela	Mérida	Music

## Appendix 3: REF Data received

Document Name	Content
Scale results 2023-2024 A06461	A scale report from 2023 and 2024 outlining activity type that took place across participating countries. Details include: Audience engagement, Audience Type, Scale indicators, Location and Audience attendance numbers
2023-2024	An overview of all festival that applied to take part in Circular Culture in 2023-24. Details include: Country, City, Festival name, Sector and Application outcome (Non Selected / Selected)
2024-2025	An overview of all festival that applied to take part in Circular Culture in 2024-25. Details include: Country, City, Festival name, Sector and Application outcome (Non Selected / Selected)
Compiled list of selected festivals	A compiled list of the festivals that are part of Circular Culture since 2021 to 2024. Details include: Country, Festival name, Sector and Edition.
Initial Survey results 2022-23	Raw data and summary slides from Julie's Bicycle's 'Initial Survey Responses Circular Culture 2023/24' on the experience and impact Circular Culture. Launched in September 2023 and published in November 2023.

# Appendix 4: Survey Data Tables

Table 11: Participating Festivals

País	Ciudad
Argentina	BITBANG
Argentina	Filbita
Argentina	Ranching
Brazil	Kino Beat
Brazil	Rec-Beat Festival
Colombia	Detonante Sounds Festival Quibdó
Colombia	Disonarte Festival
Colombia	Entreviñetas Festival
Cuba	Drum Festival
Cuba	Ecomanigua Festival
México	Art and Environment Festival
México	AXE Ceremony
México	FECIBA Neighborhood Film Festival
México	FICUNAM
México	Sound Visions
Perú	At All Costs
Perú	Latin American Film Festival in Native Languages
Perú	Selvámonos Festival
Trinidad and Tobago	COCO Dance Festival
Venezuela	Lyric Culture Fest

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 12: Participating Festivals – All Sectors Represented

Festival sector	Count of responses
Dance	6
Editorial	2
Fashion	1
Film	6
Multidisciplinary	12
Music	12
Photography	1
Visual Arts	2
Videogames	2
(Other) Mixed	1
(Other) New Technologies	1
(Other) Comic	1
(Other) Theatre	1
(Other) Animation	1
(Other) Theatre and Circus	1

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 13: Participating Festivals - Main Sector

Main festival sector	Count of responses
Music	10
Fashion	1
Visual Arts	2
Editorial	1
Film	4
Multidisciplinary	4
Dance	1
(Other) Animation	1
(Other) Art and Environment	1
(Other) Comic	1
(Other) Theatre	1

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 14: Participating Festivals - Years of Operation

Years of operation	Count of responses
20	1
1	1
24	1
3	1
8	1
30	1
16	1
6	1
11	2
5	2
2	2
9	2
14	2
10	3
15	3

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 15: Participating Festivals – Yearly Attendance

Yearly attendance	Count of responses
1,500	1
10,000	1
2,000	3
20,000	1
25,000	1
4,000	2
4,500	1
40,000	1
400	1
400-900	1
5,000	2
50,000	1
6,000	1
60,000	1
8,000	3
8,500	1
9	1
9,000	1

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 16: Participating Festivals - Year of Participation

Year of participation	Count of responses
Year 1 (2021-2022)	6
Year 2 (2022-2023)	9
Year 3 (2023-2024)	18

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 17: Motivation for participation

Motivation	Count of responses
Developing a better understanding of sustainability for your festival	14
To develop skills to be able to implement sustainability actions for your festival	16
Collaborate with UK artists	15
Financial support	18

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 19: Motivation for participation

## Motivations – Text Responses

To promote a festival that relates art and the environment and **to be the festival that is developed in the CDMX for these topics.**

**Consolidate more than 15 years of collaboration with the British Council.**

The possibility of receiving a fund or investment of resources to strengthen the festival's programming and guide its implementation in a social impact and sustainability initiative.

Being able to count on British artists at the festival

In 2022 Mailen, one of our producers, had the opportunity to travel to Portugal and participate in WOMEX, where she met artists and producers from the United Kingdom, with whom she established very good links. **After this, the call for Circular Culture, was the necessary push to be able to realize this work together.** The British artist worked together with a local artist, creating new music together through video calls. This generated a unique bond between both artists from these countries, being a unique experience from the beginning, not only in terms of performance, but also in terms of the human aspect.

**In Cuba every year it becomes more difficult to organize an event like this. Having the possibility of your support allows us to develop all the ideas we have conceived for 21 editions, and we enhance the international character of the event by inviting artists from the UK.**

It seemed like a good opportunity to collaborate with international bodies and **explore new possibilities for the festival.**

Table 18: Main Motivation for participation

Main Motivation	Count of responses
Developing a better understanding of sustainability for your festival	5
To develop skills to be able to implement sustainability actions for your festival	3
Collaborate with UK artists	7
Financial support	7

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

For us at Detonante Festival, **it is very important to ensure that local participants benefit from new knowledge** from the training given by us in the organization of the event, but also to generate connections with different individuals in the music and artistic sector that will allow them to have new presentations or job opportunities in the future. In addition, through the connection with artists from the United Kingdom, new knowledge and cultural exchange is generated that can enrich their presentations in the future.

**AXE Ceremonia is distinguished for being socially responsible**, so this edition sought to reduce environmental impact indicators, promote economic ones and scale the social legacy.

For some time now we have been looking for the possibility of doing something together with artists from the United Kingdom. FICUNAM always seeks cultural exchange and for us one of the best ways is to do it hand in hand with the cultural institutions of the countries with which we collaborate. We had Luke Fowler in mind and it was on this basis that we decided to ask for support to make it happen.

Raise awareness among new generations.

**Strengthen sustainability in the festival**, learn about other projects working on sustainability in the region, financial support.

The Festival, like other festivals organized by the Sistema de Teatros de la Ciudad de México has a limited budget, however we are aware of the need to implement actions that favor sustainability and sustainability of the same. The Circular Culture program definitely contributes to this cause and also allows us to provide knowledge to our decision makers regarding the impact of our decisions and actions in the field of sustainability and environmental care. Finally, towards the creators who collaborate with us and our public, it allows us to communicate these actions and try to positively influence social actions aimed at caring for the environment.

**What motivated us to participate in the program was the possible collaboration with artists from the UK** because, given the profile of Bitbang that mainly promotes and encourages artists and authorial proposals, in the UK we find the largest number of this more avant-garde profile. BITBANG emphasizes training through master classes, intensive face-to-face and online workshops, laboratories, and being able to collaborate with UK artists to share their experiences has always been essential for us. Unfortunately Bitbang has very little support, the public we had through INCAA, Fondo Metropolitano, Fondo Nacional de las Artes and Mecenazgo is no longer there (yes Mecenazgo for this year), and it is also free. That is why financial support was essential for the two previous editions. In addition, we have included sustainability actions and activities related to the care of the environment, which we learned a lot and we want to continue deepening.

Implement concrete actions for the sustainability of our festival and establish networks with UK artists.

Implement new sustainable proposals that will add to the festival's philosophy.

We really enjoyed and appreciated the sustainability training.

**It was the opportunity to be able to relate with sustainable festival referents** and to be able to finance these actions, which are difficult to carry out in production.

**The collaboration with a UK artist and the Rec-Beat Festival would have been excellent if it had been approved.** The festival is famous for launching new international artists and bringing in new acts. In addition, we had an excellent experience in 2023 with the band O. and DJ Dolores.

**It's a unique opportunity to get financial support**, in exchange for artists and institutions from the UK. This is a very important differentiator of the program, and being related to environmental agendas for the festival is also fundamental.

**We are a tiny festival and we are always seeking financial support to maintain our offering.** We also try to be ecologically aware. For instance, we have a virtual office. So we thought that this was a good opportunity to get additional funding, provide a collaboration for a T&T and UK artist (since our offerings are local, regional and international) and to take our sustainability goals to another level.

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 20: Extent to which Circular Culture has contributed to: The longer term sustainability of festivals

Contribution to long term sustainability	Count of responses
Major contribution	5
Minor contribution	6
No contribution	1
Some contribution	9

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 21: Extent to which Circular Culture has contributed to: Increasing skills and practices in relation to sustainability standards

Contribution to increasing skills and practices	Count of responses
Major contribution	6
Minor contribution	3
No contribution	12

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 22: Extent to which Circular Culture has contributed to: Providing training and connections to become more sustainable

Contribution to providing training and connections	Count of responses
Major contribution	9
Minor contribution	3
Some contribution	9

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 23: How Participants describe the content of the training provided by Circular Culture

The design of the training content	Count of responses
It was designed primarily for festivals larger than mine	11
It was designed primarily for festivals like mine	10

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 24: Topics Participants would have liked to be included in the Circular Culture training sessions

## Topics – Text Responses

Well, I think the program is a great initiative but I feel that it has become detached from its main objective, which is to support and give continuity to emerging festivals, by supporting large festivals such as the Cervantino and the FIL or Baidorá, which have ample resources, the objective of promoting festivals that are carried out with scarce resources is lost.

Explain CB strategies and expectations to make the collaboration more stable.

Co-financing alternatives or complementary management lines for access to financial, technical, logistical and human resources also oriented to sustainability and social impact initiatives.

Sustainability when the headquarters is not owned

The sessions were given from a perspective that is difficult to apply in the Argentine territory, with a strong focus and emphasis on the work of volunteers, since in the economic context of the country, it is impossible for us not to pay people to do any kind of work at the festival.

I'm fine with everything they do

That it was more focused on the territory and the type of projects we are. In our case most of us were small projects and it would have been nice to know similar regional experiences and tools that had a more realistic application.

No.

Responsible production and consumption, zero waste.

More specific to film and audiovisual festivals. Many types of festivals are mixed, which do not necessarily share needs and possibilities.

Know-how to measure the festival's carbon footprint.

According to the current form, I would only add support in contacts with other UK projects and artists.

Strategies for sustainable or sustainable production

I would have liked to see further development of communication strategies related to sustainability.

Experiences in Latin America

Social sustainability

Although it was not included in the general program, the teacher assigned to us helped us with all the doubts.

Tracking formats for measurements

Perhaps questions of a more critical nature about the anthropogenic causes of climate change, something that speaks more in a macro and structural way, so that in some way we can then think about the micro, which are the festivals.

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 25: Knowledge gained as a result of participating in Circular Culture?

## Knowledge gained – Text Responses

The most relevant is the weaving we have done with artists from various parts of the world, mainly from the United Kingdom.

Energy management and materials disposal

A systemic understanding of arts festival management and its impact on the field of planetary sustainability.

The feedback we received from Verónica (the British Council representative in Argentina) was very useful to put it into practice when applying for other calls for applications.

Exchange with other festivals

Waste management, protocols to implement more sustainable strategies and provide more accurate information.

The importance of cultural exchange and how it can enrich the artists who participate in the festival.

The whole issue of the carbon footprint and the amount of waste generated at festivals of this magnitude

Some alternatives for waste management, lighting and diffusion materials.

Mechanisms to change behavior; communication strategies; events with sustainable practices

Technical expertise for the manufacture and implementation of dry toilets.

All the knowledge regarding actions that festivals can take to improve sustainability was new.

Making our Festival more sustainable

I especially value the information on how to avoid polluting.

Build a sustainability policy for the festival's operations in a cross-cutting manner.

Some very interesting and inspiring case studies, especially from Thiago Jesus on the exchange relationship with indigenous people.

None

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 26: Extent to which participating in Circular Culture, contributed to knowledge gained

Contribution of Circular Culture in knowledge gained	Count of responses
I would have acquired some of this knowledge, but it would have taken much longer without the Circular Culture program.	8
I would have acquired some of this knowledge, but not on the same scale.	6
I would have gained all of this knowledge regardless of Circular Culture	1
I wouldn't have gained any of this knowledge without Circular Culture	2

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 27: Skills and competencies have you gained as a result of participating in Circular Culture

### Skills and competencies gained – Text Responses

El Huerto Roma Verde organizes several festivals either as producer or co-producer, the relevance of circular culture is that it allows to expand the linkage and scope of the festival.

Complementary management of strategies to mitigate and reduce the environmental impact of arts festivals.

We strengthened the international link, being able to bring a British artist.

I can involve more people in the event's production team, which allows the festival to be more comprehensive.

Implementation of Protocols and more accurate searches

Recognition and impact

Raise awareness among the entire team for the implementation of sustainability in all the events we organize as promoter and agency.

Think outside the box a little more. Make the effort to think of sustainable alternatives to problems.

Critical analysis, alternative propositional capacity

Especially with regard to dry baths.

During the training sessions we understood that we could improve access for people with disabilities in different spaces. The festival has different venues in the City of Buenos Aires and we encouraged the use of bicycles, with maps. Free water stations: We asked people to come with their own water glasses and bottles and there were free water stations in all the venues of the festival. Sustainability also in Art: Cultura Circular helped us to include the topic of climate change in different workshops. We always wanted to bring sustainability as a theme to the animation pieces and after the Circular Culture trainings we found a way to suggest it. The festival's programming became entirely online.

Sustainability in art festivals

Assessment of the measurement of contamination

Strategic planning. Public-private partnerships for sustainability

I believe that the results themselves of the collaboration with the British artist were more important for my training as a curator and manager than the mentoring. The work we've done together here has been incredible and we've been able to activate other networks and people in a really special shared project, so I believe that would be the great power of Cultura Circular, to have provided these meetings and exchanges, with ecological issues as a motive.

The drive to make a paperless programme work.

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 28: Extent to which participating in Circular Culture, contributed to skills and competencies gained

Contribution of Circular Culture in skills and competencies gained	Count of responses
I would have acquired most of these skills and competencies, but not to the same extent.	3
I would have acquired some of these skills and competencies, but it would have taken me much longer without the project activities.	10
I would have gained all of these skills and competencies, regardless of the project activities	1
I would have gained most of these skills and competencies, but not to the same scale	1
I would not have acquired these skills and competencies without the project activities.	3

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 29: Extent that Participants understood sustainability issues related to festivals before participating in Circular Culture

Had an understanding of sustainability issues related to festivals	Count of responses
Agreed	9
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Strongly agree	5

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 30: Extent that Participants felt empowered to advocate for sustainability before participating in Circular Culture

Felt empowered to advocate for sustainability	Count of responses
Agreed	5
Disagree	3
Neither agree nor disagree	1
Strongly agree	8

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 31: Extent that Participants had the practical skills and techniques to implement sustainable practices in my festival work before participating in Circular Culture

Had the practical skills and techniques to implement sustainable practices in festival work	Count of responses
Agreed	4
Disagree	6
Neither agree nor disagree	4
Strongly agree	3

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 33: Extent that Participants knew where to find support and information to help my festival be more sustainable before participating in Circular Culture

Knew where to find support and information to help my festival be more sustainable	Count of responses
Agreed	1
Disagree	5
Neither agree nor disagree	5
Strongly agree	3
Strongly disagree	2
I don't know	1

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 32: Extent that Participants had the networking skills needed to establish partnerships and engage with UK artists before participating in Circular Culture

Had the networking skills needed to establish partnerships and engage with UK artists	Count of responses
Agreed	2
Disagree	3
Neither agree nor disagree	5
Strongly agree	6
Strongly disagree	1

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 34: Extent that Participants had confidence in their festivals' future before participating in Circular Culture

Had confidence in their festivals' future	Count of responses
Agreed	3
Disagree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	5
Strongly agree	5
Strongly disagree	1
I don't know	1

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 35: Sustainability initiatives festivals implement before participating in Circular Culture?

## Sustainability initiatives – Text Responses

A community that attends to listen to experts on environmental issues with specific topics.

### Interest of new generations

A better understanding of operational and logistical processes

We were able to contact an organization that deals specifically with waste collection and separation.

We have gained other audiences that we did not have before, at least massively.

**Search for energy alternatives**, waste management, food options, etc.

**The space is appropriated**, which generates that the space is left in the same conditions in which it was delivered.

Consolidating the festival as diverse and inclusive

Put the issue on the logistics table.

This was its first edition. It has no previous reference for comparison.

better overall image and dry toilets with technical improvements

In 2020, in our entirely online edition, 20 thousand people participated in the two weeks with 8 hours of daily activities. As we continue to do many activities online and other face-to-face activities, **we reduce considerably the number of people who attend the festival in person, as well as the participation of international referents through virtual talks or mentoring.** // Carbon footprint reduction // Waste reduction // Awareness-raising

Increased education of our participating public.

Positioning sustainability as a pioneer within the framework of regional festivals.

Increased public attention and knowledge that the festival is a catalyst for ecological agendas and reflections

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 36: How festivals feel about their longevity since taking part in Circular Culture?

## Festival Longevity – Text Responses

Well, **for us our festival is something that we will do permanently every year**, it is already a hallmark of the space.

No difference. We did not receive more support in the second year and we do not understand why.

I have no opinion on the matter, for now

**Having participated in the circular culture program has given us very good visibility** and has generated confidence to get new partners.

We have just started this year and it has been a great experience.

Helped give it longevity

With practices such as those of the Circular Culture program, we hope to continue for many more years in the heart of Quibdó as one of the largest social actors in the territory.

Every year we want to implement improvements **to increase the environmental, social and economic value** in the medium and long term, contributing to the progress of the festival and the welfare of the community.

I don't quite understand the question. But I guess we are making an effort to reduce the environmental impact and in that sense I think we are getting younger.

More likely.

I do not know

**Since the Bitbang festival has participated in the Circular Culture program, we have had the opportunity to learn and implement practices in favor of sustainability.**

This approach has been invaluable to us, helping us to improve our actions and reduce our environmental impact. However, despite the progress we have made in sustainability, we face challenges due to the current cultural situation in Argentina. The change in government policies has considerably reduced the public support we used to receive, which generates uncertainty about the future of the festival. Although this year we have the collaboration of important cultural spaces such as the CCK, the Recoleta Cultural Center, the Borges Cultural Center and the Gaumont, we cannot foresee with certainty whether we will be able to count on their support in the coming years. This financial and resource uncertainty puts at risk the continuity of the festival and the positive impact we seek to generate through our initiatives. In the meantime, from the Bitbang and the artistic community that supports us, we will continue to seek ways to remain a space for meeting and dissemination of our culture.

We look forward to continuing to work together

**Funding is still a challenge**, every year it is necessary to reinvent its sources of financing because it is not yet self-sustainable.

helped a lot to make the last edition happen and will be important for the current one, so I believe it helps to keep the flame burning.

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 37: The likelihood of festivals recommending the Circular Culture programme to their network.

Likelihood of recommending Circular Culture	Count of responses
0 – not likely	1
1	0
2	0
3	0
4	0
5	1
6	0
7	0
8	1
9	2
10 – extremely likely	11

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 38: Reasoning behind scores on recommending the Circular Culture programme to their network.

## Main reason - Text Responses

Well, I think the program is a success but I think **you should focus on promoting or giving continuity to festivals that started with you** and that are consolidating and not give big festivals with resources, especially those in which the government invests significant amounts of money.

**They totally changed priorities.** The support was given to big governmental festivals with which we cannot compete. The lines they are looking for are not clear and the communication and feedback was good but this year it disappeared.

**We are excited and inspired by the program,** its approach, the experience we have had and the impact it has had.

**It is essential to be able to count on financing that accompanies independent cultural projects.**

Because it is admirable to have support when we need it most.

Financial support, experience and benefits of meeting and networking activities, CB support

Great ally, very clear in their call and always willing to help taking into account the applicant's needs.

**The attention and advice was excellent at all times,** I had all the clear information to implement the sustainable program within the festival and the impact was so great that it became part of the values of the promoter to continue organizing sustainable festivals.

I think it is a good program. I think it can be improved. **It could be fine-tuned a little more to be more effective.**

Magnificent experience

It has been a great experience this collaboration with the British Council and we believe it would be of great help for any other project like ours.

**I would recommend the Circular Culture program for the apprenticeship,** the appreciation of sustainability, the tangible benefits, the networking and opportunities, the opportunity to collaborate with UK artists, the innovative way of finding solutions, because it helps to comply with sustainability regulations and can improve an organization's standing with sponsors and institutions that value environmental commitment, for the positive impact on the community and the world.

It is a great program, which needs to be better disseminated in our continent.

It is a good experience, the amounts are still very small for the transition to a sustainable festival and the audience expectation is very high.

Because it is a fundamental program for exchanges with the United Kingdom and its cultural agents.

We didn't really get major learnings from the grant, but we have recommended it to another mini festival which is differently formatted to ours - the African Film Festival of Trinidad and Tobago. We think that it may work for them.

Table 39: How the Circular Culture programme could be improved

## Recommended improvements to the programme - Text Responses

Supporting emerging festivals and giving continuity to those that were born with you.

**Maintaining links with the institutions with which they have worked for 15 years or** maintaining communication with us.

**1. Increase economic resources** to support festivals for a longer period of time or for more than one year in order to enhance the sustainability of the initiatives developed,

2. Create, promote and support meeting scenarios between the festivals of each country in the network in order to strengthen the exchange of experiences.

**The training part focused on the sustainability of events could be a little more realistic depending on each territory.** It is not the same in Argentina than in Mexico or the United Kingdom.

**I think there is an overlap between music and dance.** I think it would be interesting to think about that as well.

Make collaboration with the United Kingdom more flexible or clearer in order to understand the possibilities

Perhaps by expanding the economic resources to which one can aspire for the call to generate a greater impact in the territory.

With support for more types of events

**Specify a little more the themes according to the festival profiles.** Do not mix music festivals with film or dance festivals because they have very different characteristics. Maybe make a common core for all of them and then divide them by specialties.

Doing more personalized work with each project, incubator style that closely help you become better.

One difficulty we had was to find good contacts in the UK, **it would be of great help to get support from the British Council on this point.**

1. Implement post-training follow-up actions to maintain commitment and foster continued collaboration among participating festivals.
2. Introduce a pitch session in which festivals present their sustainability initiatives and issues, promoting peer review
3. Improve support to festivals in the development of sustainability-related messages, so that they can be received by the public in the best possible way

**greater participation and exchange between Latin American and UK artists.** We know it is a UK fund, but if a fund only benefits UK artists it is a new type of colonialism.

Long-term support.

Perhaps by creating a physical and programmatic circulation between festivals, in which programs can cross paths.

Perhaps rather than the top-down approach, have the festivals share their approach to sustainability FIRST (i.e., at the beginning of the grant) and then look for synergies among the groups. The British Council would be more of a facilitator in that regard. It might also be more useful for the smaller enterprises.

Table 40: If participating festivals engaged with UK based artists/creative professionals before Circular Culture

UK Engagement before Circular Culture	Count of responses
Yes	9
No	7

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 41: If participating festivals engaged with UK based artists/creative professionals as part of Circular Culture

UK Engagement as part of Circular Culture	Count of responses
Yes	15
No	1

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 42: Why festivals did not engage with UK based artists/creatives

## Non engagement with UK based artists/ creative professionals - Text Responses

We did hire even in this edition where we did not receive the support, unfortunately we had to limit ourselves on this occasion to bring some artists because we were not selected. I also reiterate that it seems a little incongruent to me that you support large festivals that have ample resources and those that you promoted at the beginning are not followed up.

We received no support. After 15 years there was no more interest from BC Mexico to collaborate with cmmas.

We could not invite more artists due to lack of budget.

Lack of time to schedule activities and lack of sufficient resources to bring people from there.

We have no notion of the importance they have in the circular environment.

FICUNAM invites artists to come and share their work and sometimes to give talks. In this case there was a fee because the artist was invited to present an installation piece as well as films. Sometimes it is hired, sometimes it is not. In this case it was done. What we always do is to pay fees or seek support to pay the artist for the right to exhibit his films.

All the people working in Bitbang are Argentinean and are part of the national animation community.

we do hire

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 43: Details of engagement with UK based artists/ creative professionals collaboration as part of Circular Culture

## Engagement with UK based artists/ creative professionals – Text Responses

We have worked on several projects with organizations in the UK and continue to produce things together and collaborate, for example with Glastonbury in recommending content, as well as having a relationship with the Origenes festival in the UK.

Previous links to circular culture for more than 15 years

Inspiring and collaborative

It was very good since 2022, then in 2023, **with the application to the circular culture program, we were able to achieve it.**

After the near disappearance of record sales in stores, the decreasing interest of the public in radio, among other reasons, DJs have become the driving force of different musical projects around the world, developing their own initiatives, and imposing their musical criteria in places where artists cannot reach. **That's why the experience with DJ Ricafed was important for us, and we aspire to increase these invitations to UK musicians again.**

Project design and film exchange

**It was a spectacular relationship,** they were always willing to generate an exchange of knowledge with local artists from Quibdó.

FICUNAM is an international festival, and actively seeks to engage with international artists, including those from the United Kingdom. **We are interested in what is produced in that country.** We bring films, we have done some retrospectives, and we get in touch with artists to explore the possibility of inviting them to share with Mexican audiences.

Excellent. Very collaborative and enriching.

Initially we were in talks with Kambe Events / Shambala. Finally we got to collaborate with Ashanti Selah, an important young exponent of Dub / Reggae from UK.

**We follow in the footsteps of artists who inspire us since their beginnings, we encourage them to participate in our animation calls, we select them, they meet Bitbang, we follow each other.** Botbang was invited to participate in the biggest animation festivals in the world such as Annecy, Ottawa, Kaboom, Manchester, Montreal, etc, and we know the artists. In addition, all the people who collaborate in Bitbang work in the animation field as directors, producers or animators, so we know each other. Also, every year we talk to the Royal College of Art to introduce us to new talent.

Very good

The opportunity to work with OBEKA as a Disonarte artist generated an important synergy between local musicians and the alternative electronic and tropical music scene.

**Through a three-week artistic residency, the artist was able to collaborate and exchange with dozens of other artists and professionals,** and we very forcefully presented a group exhibition with the results of the residency, which had a great repercussion in the city.

We approached TT/UK artist Bryony Benge-Abbott to work with A k u z u r u, a TT artist since they both engage the environment in their work. Both are contemporary visual artists. A k z u r u uses a lot of movement in her work and has been part of the festival before.

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 44: On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is no understanding and 5 is strong understanding, the extent festivals feel they have an understanding of UK values and standards as a result of participating in Circular Culture?

Have an understanding of UK values and standards	Count of responses
1- without understanding	1
3	2
4	8
5 - strong understanding	2

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 45: Sustainability values / standards learnt from participation in Circular Culture?

## Sustainability values / standards learnt – Text Responses

I believe that Huerto Roma Verde, because of its mission and objectives, understands these issues very well, which is why we liked the objective of the program so much at the beginning.

Those mentioned above

Participation, creativity, reduction of negative impacts, **collaborative and community development**

We already had some knowledge, but **sharing our experiences with Cultura Circular develops us and allows us to continue thinking about the future.**

Prevention, avoidance of use of certain materials and better planning

Punctuality and commitment

Being conscious and responsible, taking care of the use of certain materials to take care of the environment and to reduce the environmental impact.

The value of taking responsibility for our impact on the environment. We are part of a whole and what will make the difference is to assume our share. Always ask ourselves what is necessary, what is not, what impact our decisions will have. **Collaborating in cultural matters is a way of contributing to the change of mentalities.**

Inclusion Protocol

In summary, on a daily basis we have strengthened our commitment to sustainability and environmental values at the festival.

From our participation in the Circular Culture program, we learned and implemented several key sustainability values and standards that are fundamental to the development and management of our festival. Among them are: Waste Reduction / Energy Efficiency / Sustainable Mobility / Responsible Consumption / Communication / Community Collaboration / Inclusion.

respect, sustainability, connection, reciprocity, teamwork between the two countries.

Inclusion, importance of climate change, accessibility, etc.

I can't measure it

We were pretty much familiar with those standards before.

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 46: If festivals experienced an increase in their ability to attract investment

Experienced an increase in their ability to attract investment	Count of responses
I don't know	7
No	3
Yes	6

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 47: How participation has impacted festivals ability to attract investment

### Ways participation has impacted the ability to attract investment – Text Responses

**Having the endorsement of the British Council is very important for us to be able to attract new investors.**

Because we had explored very little in this field before. We had very little information about the support we can receive from other countries.

It generates a seal of validation in our festival as we are impacting sustainably and with cultural exchange to a society widely affected by the armed conflict as it is the Quibdosenã.

Seeking companies that share the same values of promoting the circular economy.

**It has created interest and demonstrated its impact on the community.**

Exchanges with artists and foundations in the United Kingdom

Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)

Table 48: Other benefits experienced as a result of participating in Circular Culture

### Additional benefits – Text Responses

Because adding and collaborating is always the best benefit one can obtain.

Yes. Links with new UK artists and institutions in 2023.

While it is too early to argue, it has opened us up to ideas and conversations with stakeholders who were not previously so directly involved with our event.

Mailén, one of the event's producers, has been a beneficiary of the Global Music Leaders program, where she will focus on meeting new artists to continue building bridges between artists from different countries and cultures.

I believe that having your support has been a wake-up call to our own institutions.

Increase collaboration networks

Recognition

Not at the moment

To have more breadth of vision in the team.

Yes, creation of alliances and networks with other projects.

Recognition by other festivals and organizations participating in the program.

**Bitbang experienced several additional benefits that go beyond sustainability.**

**These benefits include:** Strengthened Festival Image: Adopting sustainable practices enhanced our image and visibility as an environmentally committed event / Increased Collaboration and Networking: we connected with other organizations, festivals and cultural sector professionals who share a focus on sustainability, opening opportunities for collaborations and joint projects / Operational Efficiency: Implementing sustainable practices led us to optimize our processes and operations. / Innovation and Creativity: The focus on sustainability drove the search for innovative and creative solutions to integrate responsible practices into the festival, enriching our offer and leading us to new artistic proposals. In addition, participation in the program helped us to comply with sustainability regulations and requirements, which is increasingly valued by sponsors, institutions and partners.

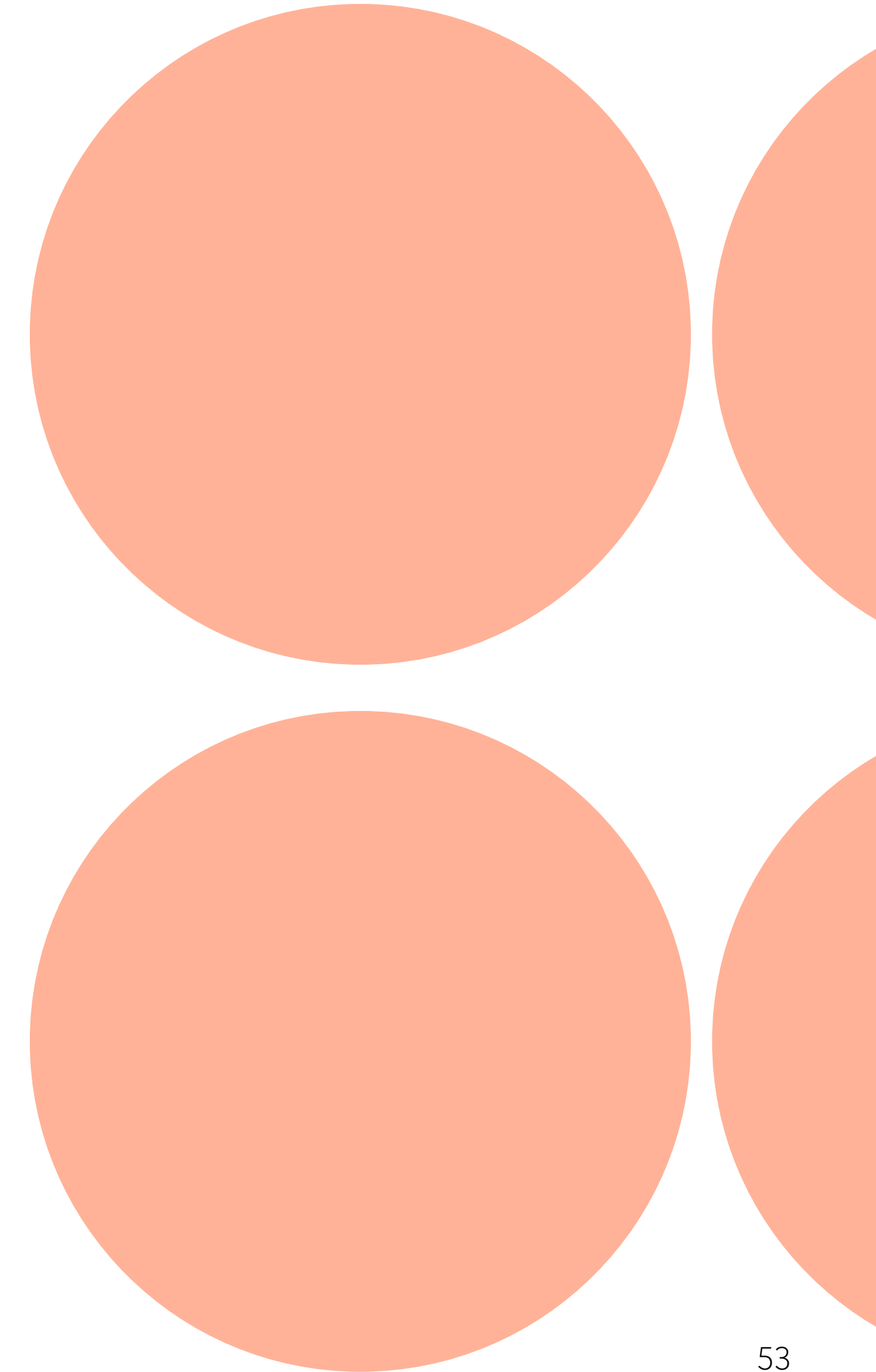
No.

To position ourselves as a relevant festival in Colombia.

Directly linked to the CC, I can't think of another direct benefit.

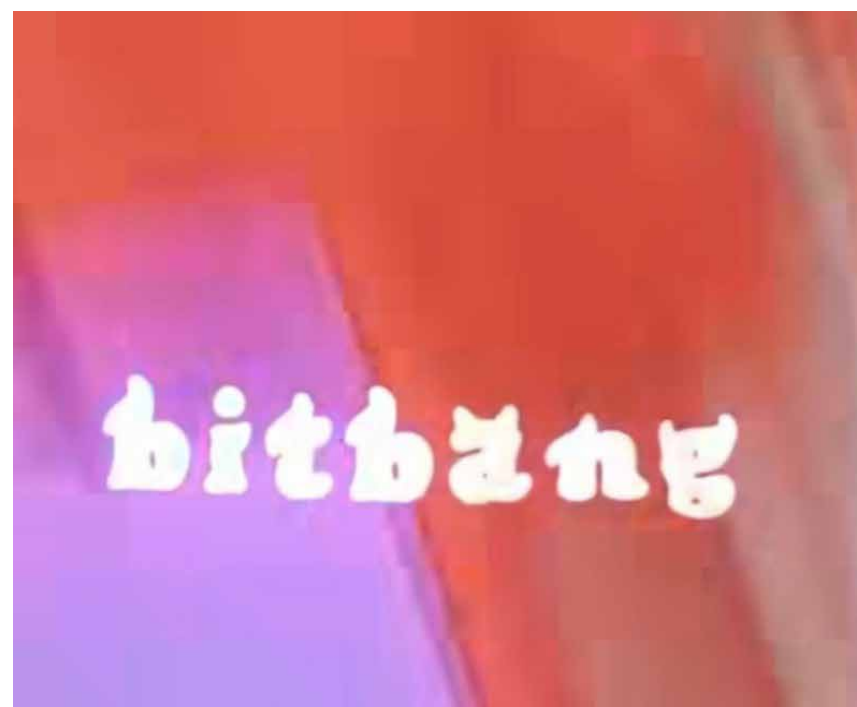
**We felt enriched by the collaboration between the two contemporary visual artists.**

*Source: Circular Culture Participant Survey (2024)*



# Appendix 5: Case studies

## Bitbang Buenos Aires, Argentina



Established in 2014, the Bitbang Festival in Buenos Aires is a platform for promoting experimental and authorial animation and videogames. Serving as an international festival since 2015, Bitbang has gained a reputation for nurturing emerging talent while showcasing global leaders in the industry. The festival's diverse offerings include workshops, masterclasses, film screenings, installations, immersive

art experiences, and vibrant parties. Over the past two years, Bitbang has extended its reach through regional editions across Argentina and monthly online events, solidifying its influence both locally and globally.

### Objectives and Activities

A core objective of Bitbang is to facilitate artistic exchange among professionals, enthusiasts, and creators. The festival's International Animation Competition features categories such as International Shorts, Latin American Shorts, and Videoclips, highlighting both global and regional talents. Additionally, Bitbang hosts a video game awards segment with seven categories, encompassing both Latin American and international games.

The festival's commitment to community engagement is reflected in the Bitbang Club, which facilitates interaction through annual gatherings, online activities, and in-person events. A dedicated TV channel further extends Bitbang's reach, featuring content focused on animation and videogames.

### Participation in the Circular Culture Programme

Bitbang's involvement in Circular Culture began in 2022 and continued into 2023. This collaboration introduced a new dimension to the festival's programming and sustainability efforts. In 2022, Bitbang invited Julia Pott, a British animator, to conduct a masterclass and hold a film exhibition. Pott, celebrated for her work on the Cartoon Network series 'Summer Camp Island,'

also participated in a one-night Artistic Camp at Isla La Rosana, engaging with colleagues and fans on topics such as climate change and contemporary living.

*"My experience at Bitbang Festival was bloody brilliant, and there was a whopping community of 'Summer Camp Island' fans there, which felt wonderful."*

*Julie Pott, British animator*



In 2023, the festival hosted Sophie Koko, a London-based animation director, who led a talk and a retrospective, followed by a Q&A session. Her involvement extended to assisting in the selection of award-winning animations for the festival. These interactions not only enriched the festival's content but also provided a rare opportunity for Latin American audiences to engage with prominent British animators.



- Bike-Friendly Accessibility: Promoting bicycle use by providing maps and routes to festival venues.
- Free Water Stations: Encouraging attendees to bring their own bottles by offering free water stations throughout the venues.

### Impact and Future Directions

The sustainability efforts at Bitbang have led to several positive outcomes, including improved inclusivity, a stronger focus on environmental themes in art, and better access for people with disabilities. The festival's founder, Bárbara Cerro, noted the practical insights gained from Circular Culture, particularly in enhancing the festival's sustainability guidelines and creating valuable connections with other festival organisers.

*"We always wanted to bring sustainability as a topic to animation pieces and after the Circular Culture trainings we found a way to suggest it. Therefore, in 2023, we had a Gif Workshop with the premise 'Contributing to a more sustainable world' that resulted in very original and touching gifs."*

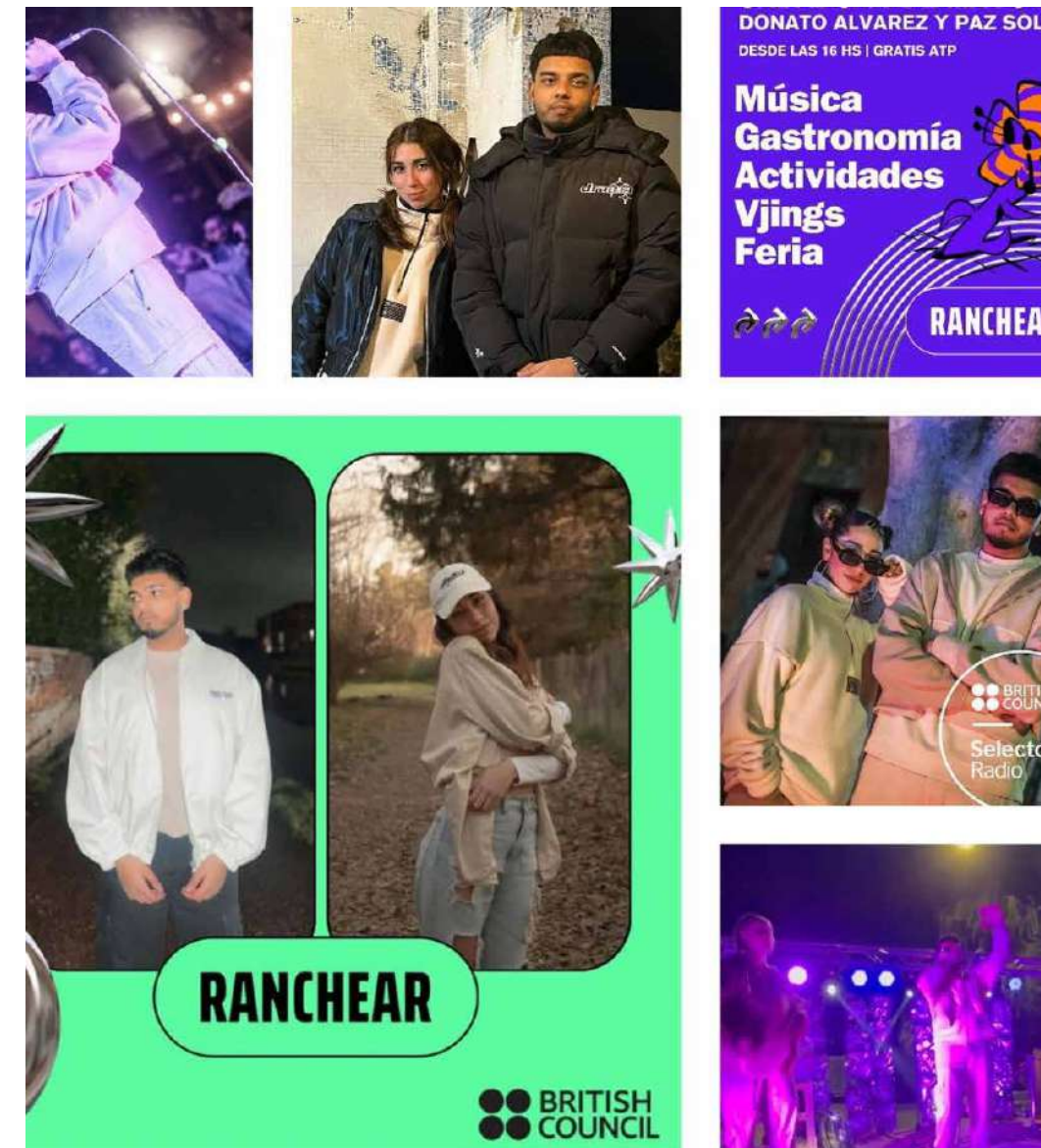
*Bárbara Cerro, Founder and Director*

### Sustainability Initiatives

Bitbang's participation in Circular Culture spurred the festival to adopt several sustainability practices. With support from the Circular Culture team, Bitbang organised a three-day GIF workshop led by Eze Torres from Giphy Arts, centred on the theme of 'Contributing to a More Sustainable World.' Additionally, the festival hosted a Game Jam and an Animation Jam, both focused on sustainability, demonstrating the festival's commitment to integrating environmental themes into their creative practices.

Beyond the programme, Bitbang has independently implemented several sustainability actions. These include:

- Diversity: Ensuring all festival organisers are women, with a focus on inclusivity in animation and gaming.
- Voces del Sur (South Voices): A collaborative initiative with Ojo Raro TV to encourage participation from native Latin American communities and excluded minorities.
- Paperless Festival: Emphasising digital communication and minimising paper use.
- Free Events: Making almost all festival activities free to the public.



### Ranchear Buenos Aires, Argentina

Ranchear is a biannual free street festival celebrated as an "open urban culture festival." The event transforms a public street into a lively space from 4 PM until midnight, featuring street food, craft drinks, tattoo artists, and independent clothing designers. Live performances by DJs, bands, and musicians add vibrancy to the atmosphere. According to Mailén de la María, Ranchear's general producer and music coordinator, "freedom" is the festival's defining characteristic.

*"More important than having civil rights is being able to exercise them in a democratic and free way, and our event allows everyone to dance, sing, dress, and meet as they want and with whoever they want."*

*Participation in the Circular Culture Programme*

In May 2024, Ranchear was selected to participate in Circular Culture, a partnership that allowed them to invite a UK artist to collaborate with an Argentinian musician, adding a new element to the festival's offer.

Ranchear's participation in the programme marked its first involvement with the British Council. Through the programme's financial support, Ranchear's producers invited Joash, a musician based in Manchester, to collaborate with Argentinian musician María del Rosario Cassaro, known as Pastelilta. The festival opened a call for local musicians interested in working with Joash, receiving over 100 submissions from artists across the country. Joash selected Pastelilta, and the two musicians engaged in several Zoom meetings in the months leading up to the festival, creating a unique musical blend.

In episode 134 of Selector Radio Argentina, a podcast produced by the British Council, Joash shared his excitement about the collaboration:

*"The music we've created together is different from anything I've done before; I'm looking forward to playing with her at the venue."*

Pastelilta also expressed her enthusiasm in an interview with El Clarín, a prominent Argentinian newspaper, highlighting the interesting dynamics of connecting with a musician from a different cultural background.

### Sustainability Initiatives

With support from Circular Culture, Ranchear took significant steps to enhance the festival's sustainability. They hired Balcon de Bicicletas, a local company specialising in repairing old bikes, to encourage attendees to cycle to the event and provided on-site bicycle repairs. This initiative aimed to promote eco-friendly transportation among festival-goers.

In addition, Ranchear partnered with Control Ecologico S.A., a company specialising in recycling and clean waste management. The company collected around 170 kilograms of waste, providing insight into the festival's environmental impact. According to Mailén, this partnership was crucial in managing the festival's waste and aligning with their sustainability goals.



### Festival Internacional de Cine de Mar del Plata Mar del Plata, Argentina

Founded in 1954, the Festival Internacional de Cine de Mar del Plata is Argentina's oldest and most prestigious film event. Held every second semester, typically in November, the festival has grown from a modest film exhibition event to a significant competitive film festival in Latin America. Over 10 days, the festival attracts approximately 350,000 attendees who watch over 300 film screenings in 15 cinemas. The event draws actors, filmmakers, producers, and movie fans who participate in awards ceremonies, tributes, and retrospectives.

### Participation in the Circular Culture Programme

The Mar del Plata Festival's engagement with Circular Culture began in 2022 and continued into 2023. The programme offered a transformative experience for the festival's organisers, who initially believed their event was already sustainable. However, the Circular Culture workshops revealed numerous areas for improvement, particularly in reducing carbon emissions, prioritising local hiring, and minimising unnecessary travel.

Artistic director, Pablo Conde described the workshops as a "wake-up call," noting that they significantly reshaped the festival's approach to sustainability. The dynamic and passionate delivery of the Circular Culture team made the training sessions particularly impactful, instilling a deep commitment to environmental responsibility among the festival's organisers.

### Resources and Initiatives Supported by the British Council

The financial support received from the British Council was instrumental in enhancing the festival's offerings:

- **2022:** The funds were allocated to pay production fees and distribute copies of films featured in the "Immortal British Comedies" cycle, enriching the festival's diverse film lineup.
- **2023:** The resources covered international travel expenses for Prano Bailey-Bond, the director of the film Censor. As a special guest, Bailey-Bond served as a juror for the International

Competition and participated in a panel discussion with horror genre specialists. Her presence was met with great enthusiasm, facilitating a fruitful cultural exchange.



### Sustainability Initiatives

Participation in Circular Culture prompted the Mar del Plata Festival to adopt several sustainability practices:

- **Mobility:** The festival organisers reduced the environmental impact of ground travel by implementing a bus system to transport attendees from Buenos Aires airport to Mar del Plata, minimising car trips and reducing carbon emissions.
- **Paperless Operations:** Since 2022, the festival has transitioned to digital programmes and credentials, significantly cutting down on paper use. Festival signage is now made from durable materials for reuse in future editions.
- **Digital Communication:** The festival reduced

paper consumption by over 50% by leveraging social media and movie screens to disseminate information about the event and film screenings.

- **Local Hiring:** In response to Circular Culture guidelines, the festival began hiring local workers in Mar del Plata for various services, rather than bringing the entire production team from Buenos Aires, promoting local economic engagement and reducing travel-related emissions.

### Sustainability Actions Adopted Independently of the British Council

In addition to the initiatives inspired by Circular Culture, the Mar del Plata Festival has long been committed to:

- **Waste and Recycling:** The festival has implemented waste minimisation and recycling initiatives to manage the rubbish generated during the event.
- **Energy Conservation:** Organisers emphasise efficient electricity use, reinforcing the importance of energy conservation and responsible consumption throughout the festival's operations.

### Impact and Future Directions

The Mar del Plata Festival's engagement with Circular Culture has catalysed a significant shift towards sustainability, transforming the festival into a model of environmental responsibility within the film industry. The training sessions not only provided practical tools for reducing the festival's environmental impact but also encouraged a sense of community among festival organisers, who shared their challenges and successes.



### Afropunk Brasil Salvador, Brazil

Afropunk Brasil, previously known as Afropunk Salvador, is part of a worldwide festival platform created in New York over two decades ago. The festival was established to give underrepresented black punk artists a dedicated platform to showcase their talent. Initially featuring only U.S. artists, Afropunk has since expanded globally, holding events in cities such as Atlanta, Miami, Minneapolis, London, Paris, Johannesburg, and, more recently, Salvador, Brazil.

### Objectives and Activities

Afropunk Brasil is designed to significantly impact Salvador and its black residents while attracting a global audience. The 2023 edition of the festival drew attendees from all Brazilian states and over 20 countries, promoting "afrotourism." Broadcast by Brazil's largest TV channel, Globo, the festival reached an audience of 19 million people.

A key goal of the festival is to promote black entrepreneurship. All food suppliers and the company responsible for visual communication are black-owned, and the 2023 event generated R\$ 19 million for the local economy. Afropunk Brasil, licensed by the international organisation, features a diverse lineup of black artists across genres, including punk, rap, samba, and reggae. The average ticket price is R\$ 70, making it accessible to a wide audience.

### Participation in the Circular Culture Programme

2023 marked the first time Afropunk Brasil participated in Circular Culture. They recall the programme had three main outcomes: sustainability training, collaboration between Salvador and London and enhancing the festival's ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) measures.

### Sustainability Training

Two members from Afropunk Brasil's leadership team participated in the online workshops offered through Circular Culture. However, the training's impact on the wider organising team was limited, as the content was shared only informally and without much detail. The festival's organisers acknowledged the positive feedback but noted a lack of depth in their engagement with the training material.

### Collaboration between Salvador and London

The programme facilitated a collaboration between Tash LC, a black British DJ based in London, and Trapfunk & Alívio, a band from Salvador. The two parties communicated and coordinated their performance before Tash LC's arrival in Salvador. They rehearsed together and delivered a joint performance on the first night of the festival. While the collaboration did not specifically focus on sustainability, it highlighted the festival's commitment to building international artistic exchanges.

### Contributing to the ESG Budget

The financial support from Circular Culture was instrumental in maintaining and expanding Afropunk Brasil's ESG initiatives. Rather than being allocated to specific actions, the funds were incorporated into the festival's general ESG budget, which supported a variety of sustainability measures, including:



- **Simultaneous Translation and Audio Description:** Providing Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) translation and audio descriptions of performances via headphones.
- **Recycling and Composting Stations:** Live stations that allowed festival-goers to see and learn about recycling and composting processes.
- **Water-Saving Devices:** Installed in all bathrooms to reduce water usage.
- **Cooking Oil Recycling:** Collecting used cooking oil for recycling.
- **Vegetarian and Vegan Food Options:** 60% of the food offerings were plant-based.

- **Tree Planting:** Planting 1,000 native seedlings of the Atlantic Forest to offset emissions.
- **Efficient Lighting:** Ensuring all festival lighting was energy-efficient.
- **Compostable Packaging:** Using only compostable materials in the food court.



*“Without support, it is more challenging to adopt some actions without impacting the financial balance of Afropunk Brasil.”*  
IDW CEO, Potyra Lavor

## Barulhinho Delas Fortaleza, Brazil



Barulhinho Delas is a music festival centred around the involvement and empowerment of women, including cisgender, transgender, indigenous, elderly women, and women with disabilities. The name “Barulhinho Delas,” which translates to “Girls’ Little Noise,” reflects the festival’s commitment to amplifying female voices and talents in every aspect of its operations. From its inception, the festival aimed to showcase performances by women-led bands, but it soon expanded its mission to ensure that women occupy roles in all facets of the festival, from

stage setup to security. This inclusive approach extended to various demographics, including indigenous women and women with disabilities, further reinforcing the festival’s dedication to diversity and representation.

### Empowering Women Through Training and Education

As the festival organisers sought to increase female participation, they identified a gap in the availability of skilled women for certain roles. To address this, the Barulhinho Delas festival introduced a series of training workshops designed to equip women with the skills necessary to contribute to cultural production. In 2024, these workshops spanned 180 hours and covered a wide range of topics, including cultural production, project development, photography, sound engineering, and lighting. The majority of these workshops were led by women, ensuring that participants not only learned technical skills but also engaged with female role models in the industry.

### Participation in the Circular Culture Programme

Barulhinho Delas has been involved in the programme since 2023. They engaged in both training sessions offering festival organisers valuable learning experiences and artistic residencies, bringing British artists to Fortaleza and offering festival organisers valuable learning experiences.

In 2023, artisan and activist Carrie Reichardt conducted a workshop on ceramics and memory, focusing on the role of women in preserving intangible cultural heritage. In 2024, activist artists Beccy Mccray and Hannah Dave engaged with local women to explore the intersections of art, activism, and climate change.

These artistic residencies had a lasting impact on the local artists, encouraging them to rethink their creative processes and the materials they used. Festival organiser Nádia de Sousa emphasised the effects of these interactions, noting that the exchange of ideas with British artists led to a re-evaluation of daily practices among local participants.

*“For local artists, interacting with British artists for a week leaves a mark. They were very much into the idea of buying materials to make art, and the British artists suggested them to use things they already have. So, this makes us rethink our daily practice. It has a lasting effect. And we could never have brought these artists if it weren’t for British Council’s support.”*

*Nádia de Sousa*

However, Nádia also pointed out that the funding received through Circular Culture was entirely allocated to bringing these artists to Fortaleza, leaving no resources for additional climate-related actions.

### Independent Sustainability Actions

Beyond the support from the British Council, Barulhinho Delas has independently implemented several sustainability initiatives. These include using cardboard or paper for banners and signage, ensuring proper waste disposal, serving only vegan or vegetarian food, providing durable cups for drinks, and distributing seedlings or seeds to attendees. In 2024, the festival also began purchasing carbon credits to offset emissions, and all team T-shirts were made from repurposed textile industry waste fabrics.



### Disonarte Ibagué, Colombia

Disonarte is a two-day music event in Ibagué - known as the 'Musical Capital of Colombia, that highlights a rich diversity of musical genres, featuring both local and national artists, with occasional international performances. Held at the historic Museo Panoptico de Ibagué, a 19th-century prison turned cultural centre, the festival provides a platform for various musical styles, including Colombian folklore, rap, salsa, and rock, across two stages. With 13 to 14 performances each day, Disonarte not only celebrates music but also facilitates discussions on the music industry and hosts a business roundtable to support local entrepreneurs, who participate in the food court at no cost.

### Participation in the Circular Culture Programme

In 2023, Disonarte participated in Cultura Circular for the first time, which motivated the organizers to consider sustainability measures for the first time in the festival's history. Before this, environmental concerns had not been prioritised in any of the city's numerous festivals. The team engaged in online training sessions on sustainability while the grant supported an artistic residency, which brought British DJ and percussionist Obeka to Ibagué.

### Colombia-Chile-Bermuda-UK: A Global Musical Exchange

Obeka, a DJ and percussionist from Bermuda based in Manchester, UK, performed on the festival's main stage and collaborated with artists from Ibagué and Chile to co-write a song. His participation extended beyond performance; he engaged in workshops, labs with local musicians, and discussions on the music market. While sustainability was not the primary focus of his involvement, Obeka touched on environmental topics during these interactions.



Festival Disonarte's General Director, Yeison Gómez, described Obeka's visit as a valuable exchange, noting that his diverse musical background enriched the local musicians' experiences.

*"He comes from different musical backgrounds and has other points of view. It was very good to be able to put him in touch with the youngsters here."*

The collaborative song, recorded in Ibagué, connected the festival to European music markets, potentially opening new doors for local artists. Gómez emphasised the significance of this international collaboration, which could extend beyond the festival period, advancing long-term connections between Ibagué and global music scenes.

### Training and the Introduction of Sustainability

Two festival organisers attended sustainability training offered by Julie's Bicycle consultancy. The knowledge gained was shared in meetings with leaders from each operational area of the festival.

However, the initial training sessions were met with some scepticism. Ana Garzón, who managed the partnership with the British Council, observed that the discussions were heavily influenced by perspectives from the Global North. She questioned how industries responsible for significant emissions could lead conversations on sustainability, suggesting that the dialogue needed to be more inclusive of the Global South and the cultural sector.

*“How can the industries that cause the greatest emissions and damage talk about sustainability? It is neither the Global South nor the cultural sector that does this. So, the conversation needed to be broadened.”*

Despite these reservations, the training’s practical examples were well-received, particularly as Disonarte was just beginning its sustainability journey. The festival organisers recognised the need to adapt these examples to their local context, given the festival’s financial constraints. They partnered with the French organisation Climate Mural for additional guidance on enhancing sustainable practices.

The programme was instrumental in helping the Disonarte team understand environmental dynamics and identify actionable steps towards sustainability. This included measuring the festival’s environmental impact and partnering with local waste pickers to collect waste in real-time. As Gómez noted, these small initial actions have the potential to scale up over time.

The partnership with the British Council provided significant leverage for Disonarte in discussions with municipal and state administrations. This collaboration was particularly important for the festival’s communication strategy, leading to a partnership with the municipality’s Water and Climate Change Department to highlight water-related issues. Although the Ministry of the Environment did not offer financial support, it endorsed the dissemination of sustainability-related topics.

### Sustainability Actions Adopted Independently

While the following initiatives were not directly funded by Circular Culture, they were inspired by the programme:

- **T-Shirt Production:** To reduce consumption, the festival team was encouraged to wear T-shirts from previous editions during setup days, reducing the need to produce new shirts daily
- **Cardboard Cups:** The festival switched to cardboard cups for beverages, minimising plastic waste.
- **Sustainability Zone:** A designated area was created for lectures on sustainability, featuring speakers such as women managing community aqueducts - a local water and sewage system in Ibagué.
- **Conscious Communication:** The festival’s social media channels were used to share content on culture and the environment before, during, and after the event.

### Ecomanigua La Habana, Cuba



The Ecomanigua Festival is a platform for arts and children’s education while promoting sustainable practices to protect the environment. The festival was founded in 2024 by the directors of La Manigua Creativa, a cultural and educational institution, as part of their participation in the British Council’s Circular Culture initiative.

*“Our Festival is motivated by a concern we have for the issue of environmental sustainability, one of the pillars of La Manigua as a center. We saw the opportunity to hold an event that could raise awareness among families, children and adolescents, as well as generate capacities within the cultural promoters and managers that could exist in the city.”*

The festival was divided into two main parts. The first involved a workshop for educators from 30 Cuban institutions, co-hosted by La Manigua Creativa and Doorstep Arts, a British nonprofit arts education organisation based in Torbay, England. This workshop focused on using theatre as a tool to explore environmental sustainability with youth and children. The second part of the festival was a public event held which included arts workshops, theatre presentations, sustainability discussions, and a performance by local singer Liuba Maria Hevia.

Held over two days, Ecomanigua provided a platform for 30 Cuban educators to learn from the Doorstep Arts team about integrating theatre into environmental education. The festival concluded with a fair at Gustavo Pozo, a primary school in Havana, where approximately 500 attendees participated in craft activities, dance, music, and other performances.

One of the highlights of the festival was its emphasis on recycling and sustainability. Attendees were encouraged to bring waste for recycling, integrating environmental responsibility into the festivities. Furthermore, the festival arranged a talk on sustainability and climate change in collaboration with the Isla Verde Festival, which promotes environmental education through film.



### Participation in the Circular Culture Programme

Ecomanigua's inclusion in Circular Culture marked Cuba's first participation in the initiative. While the festival faced some challenges with the relevance of the training provided by Circular Culture, the exchange with British artists was exceptionally positive. The training, which they felt focused on larger festivals, did not resonate well with the Cuban context, particularly regarding engaging children and parents. However, the exchange with British artists from Doorstep Arts proved to be highly beneficial, creating meaningful dialogue and collaboration.

### A Fraternal Partnership with Doorstep Arts

Doorstep Arts, a nonprofit creative education company from Torbay, England, played a crucial role in the success of Ecomanigua. The organisation advocates for the integration of art in advancing social justice, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that every child's voice is heard. La Manigua Creativa invited Doorstep Arts to collaborate on using theatre to promote sustainable practices among Cuban children and youth. Mair George and Jade Campbell, seasoned actors and educators from Doorstep Arts, conducted workshops that left a lasting impression on the participants.

Upon returning to England, Mair and Jade reflected positively on their experience, sharing their admiration for the creative community projects in Cuba aimed at improving living conditions.

*"The people we met were incredible. We learnt about their creative community projects, the art they create, the work they do to make Cuba a better place to live."*

Silvia Padron also spoke highly of the partnership, highlighting the effective and engaging way in which Doorstep Arts shared their knowledge and the strong spirit of cooperation that developed between the teams.

*"Jade and Mair brought extensive community work experience and shared their knowledge effectively and engagingly. We developed a close working relationship with them, and there was a great spirit of cooperation."*

### Lasting Impact

Circular Culture had a significant impact on Ecomanigua, particularly in the areas of environmental education, healthy eating initiatives, and the use of art for social change. The programme increased local awareness about the importance of recycling, educating children and their parents on how to preserve the environment. Circular Culture also facilitated discussions on healthy eating practices, such as substituting sweets with fruit in children's snacks, and explored different methods of using art to promote sustainability.

Moreover, the programme stimulated debate on how to use art as a tool for education and social transformation, encouraging children to engage in critical reflection on environmental and societal issues. The partnership with the British Council also led to lasting changes within La Manigua Creativa, making the organisation's practices more sustainable.

## FIL Niños Guadalajara, Mexico



FIL Niños is the largest book gathering in Ibero-America. Held over nine days, the fair attracts a diverse audience, including book editors, publishing teams, writers, journalists, and the general public. Beyond the world of books, FIL Niños also hosts artistic and musical events, literary and academic forums, and award ceremonies, making it a multifaceted cultural celebration.

The event's scale is reflected in the participation of representatives from over 60 countries, 2,450 publishing houses, and more than 15,000 exhibitors annually. In 2023, FIL Niños welcomed over 700 authors from 52 countries. The festival is committed to fostering a love of reading among young audiences, with the Children's Pavilion being a cornerstone of this effort. In the most recent edition, the Children's Pavilion attracted over 180,000 visitors, including children and teachers from 123 schools.

### Participation in the Circular Culture Programme

Ana Elizabeth Luelmo Álvarez, the general coordinator of the Children's Pavilion at FIL, highlighted the networking opportunities as the most valuable aspect of the Circular Culture training sessions. She noted that the training connected her with professionals facing similar challenges, allowing for a rich exchange of ideas and experiences.

This networking has been instrumental in helping FIL Niños refine its approach to sustainability.

*“Circular Culture training connects you with people who are tackling the same challenges as you. It allows you to observe how others receive and process information, particularly the flow of ideas and their experiences.”*

In addition to this, the team felt the training sessions helped them to develop effective strategies for discussing sustainability and environmental topics with parents and children. This has enhanced the overall impact of their messaging on these critical issues. It also encouraged them to establish clear guidelines and metrics for measuring the sustainability of their activities. This has enabled the team to track progress and continuously improve their environmental practices.

### Empowering Sustainability Initiatives

FIL Niños, the part of the fair dedicated to young readers, has long been committed to sustainability, with support from the British Council playing a crucial role in these efforts. Since participating in the Circular Culture Programme in 2022, FIL Niños has gained greater autonomy in implementing sustainable practices. The financial backing from the programme allowed them to pursue these initiatives without requiring board approval, enabling more proactive and independent decision-making regarding sustainability in the Children's Pavilion.

During the UNESCO Conference of Parties (COP) held in Guadalajara in 2022, FIL Niños used Circular Culture funds to produce a powerful video featuring messages from young activists from the UK and other countries. The video highlighted the urgency of changing habits to combat global warming and protect the planet's future. In addition to this, FIL Niños organised a panel discussion with artists aimed at inspiring parents to envision and work toward a more sustainable future. This session attracted over 400 parents, and throughout the week, themes of global warming and sustainability were seamlessly integrated into all activities.

In 2023, the funds were utilised to create a comprehensive 'Manual for Managing Sustainable Festivals' in collaboration with Syntiro Associates from the United Kingdom. The manual provided a structured approach to sustainability, offering guidelines such as forming a dedicated sustainability team, organising regular meetings, updating processes and documentation, developing policies and action plans, empowering and training staff, hiring local service providers, recording carbon emissions and water usage, launching communication campaigns, and monitoring and reporting on sustainability metrics. The manual's implementation showed that FIL Niños left a total carbon footprint of 312.66 tons and consumed 741.42 cubic meters of water, emphasising the environmental impact of the event and the importance of ongoing sustainability efforts.

### Sustainability Actions Adopted Independently of the British Council

Since 2010, FIL Niños has independently implemented a series of sustainable practices aimed at reducing the environmental impact of the event. These initiatives include:

- Promoting Bicycle Use: FIL Niños has encouraged the event venue to become a bicycle-friendly space. This initiative required significant infrastructure changes at Expo Guadalajara, which have since benefited the venue by making it more accessible for cyclists year-round.
- Energy Management: The fair has taken diligent steps to manage energy consumption efficiently, minimising its environmental footprint.
- Waste Management: FIL Niños has hired specialised service providers to ensure the correct disposal and recycling of waste materials, aligning with best practices in sustainability.

### Festival Artístico Audiovisual Afrodescendencias Touring festival, Mexico

The Afrodescendencias Audiovisual Artistic Festival is an event rooted in local, community-based engagement, specifically designed to celebrate and elevate Afro-descendant cultures in Mexican villages. These villages, which have significant Afro-descendant populations, serve as the backdrop for the festival's four-day celebration. The festival features a diverse array of cultural activities, including concerts, workshops, visual arts exhibitions, and a film showcase, all offered free of charge.



Musical performances at the festival are led by Afro-Mexican and Afro-American artists, with 2024 marking the first inclusion of an African artist. The films showcased are directed by Afro-descendant filmmakers, and the visual arts and concert programs prominently feature local artists from the villages where the festival is held. The audience is predominantly composed of residents from these villages, reflecting the festival's deep community connections.

Given its grassroots nature, Afrodescendencias is a small-scale

festival with a modest coordinating team. The team stays in or near the villages, sourcing food and supplies locally to support the community. The festival does not have private funding and relies on volunteer support and collaborations with five Mexican universities, which provide resources such as professors, students, and materials. Local governments offer spaces for the festival, and some local artists contribute their work free of charge.

### Participation in the Circular Culture Programme

In 2024, Afrodescendencias participated in Circular Culture for the first time, receiving invaluable support that significantly enhanced the festival's offerings.

The artistic residency was a key highlight. The festival prioritised bringing an Afro-descendant artist from abroad, initially selecting a Senegalese artist living in England. However, due to visa issues, the festival invited Tanzanian musician Kyazi Lugangira, who resides in England, to participate.

Kyazi's involvement brought several significant benefits to the festival:

**An African Connection:** This was the first time an African artist participated in the festival, allowing Afro-descendant communities in Mexico to connect with someone from the continent. According to Claudia Lora Krstulovic, the festival's founder and director, *"The communities, although they know they descend from Africans, had never met anyone from the continent."*



### Engagement with Local Musicians and Students:

Kyazi performed three concerts and conducted three workshops focused on music students, particularly guitar students. He discussed the diversity of African rhythms, the importance of blending different styles and instruments, and the role of improvisation in music. His workshops also touched on issues of Afro-descendancy and racism in the United Kingdom, providing valuable cultural insights.

**Breaking Stereotypes:** Kyazi's performances challenged local expectations. As Claudia noted, *"People expected an African artist to play drums or some percussion instrument. But he plays guitar, with calmer rhythms, similar to Bossa Nova."* This broke down stereotypes and introduced audiences to contemporary African music beyond the traditional forms they might have expected.

**Festival Enhancement:** The funding from the British Council allowed the festival to not only bring in Kyazi but also to enhance other aspects of the festival. The resources were used for stage setup, sound systems, audiovisual exhibitions, and even paying directors' rights for films shown at the event. Additionally, the funds supported the cost of food served at events where Kyazi participated, further enriching the festival experience.

### Training and Workarounds

Alongside the artistic residency, two members of the Afrodescendencias team, including Claudia Lora Krstulovic, the festival's founder and director, participated in online training sessions provided by Julie's Bicycle consultancy. While the training offered valuable insights, Claudia noted that the examples presented were more applicable to larger festivals with different resources and funding models. However, the training did lead to practical solutions, such as addressing the challenge of using sustainable materials for serving food and drinks in a village facing severe water scarcity.

In 2024, the festival was held in a village experiencing one of the worst droughts in its history. Washing reusable ceramic plates, as done in previous editions, was not feasible. Through Circular Culture, the team were recommended to use recyclable cardboard plates and mugs made from wheat, allowing the festival to maintain its commitment to sustainability while respecting the local community's needs.

### Sustainability Actions Adopted Independently

Although Afrodescendencias is a small-scale festival, it has implemented several measures to minimise its environmental impact:

- **1. Local Sourcing:** The festival purchases food and supplies locally, reducing emissions from transportation and supporting the village economies where the event is held.
- **2. Waste Management:** The festival incorporates recycling and composting practices to manage waste responsibly.
- **3. ETransport Efficiency:** The festival uses only four cars, and only resorts to using a second car when the first is full, optimising transportation to reduce emissions.
- **4. Minimising Air Travel:** Only two people travelled by plane to the festival in 2024—the artist funded by the British Council and the festival organiser.

### Impact

The participation in Circular Culture has significantly boosted the festival's profile and its potential to attract new partners and Claudia believes that the support from the British Council will enhance the festival's future fundraising capacity.

*“The support from the British Council is crucial for attracting other forms of support. We are still learning how to raise funds, understanding how it happens. Certainly, it will facilitate fundraising for the future.”*

### 1° Festival Mar, Conciencia y Soundsystem Lima, Peru

The Mar, Conciencia y Soundsystem festival, co-founded by music producers Adrián Leon (of Matraca collectives) and José Henrique Choque (of Lima Dub Club), was established as an innovative event that fused their passion for soundsystem music with environmental conservation.

The festival brings together a vibrant mix of music, culture, and environmental advocacy. In 2023, attendees were treated to 10 hours of diverse musical performances, vegan food offerings, and interactive stands hosted by environmental organisations such as Oceana, Conservamos, and Héroes del Planeta. These organisations shared critical insights into their efforts to protect marine life and engaged the public in discussions about how they could contribute to these initiatives.



### Participation in the Circular Culture Programme

Mar, Conciencia y Soundsystem's participation in Circular Culture marked a significant milestone for the festival. This was their first involvement in the programme, and they were subsequently selected for the 2024 edition as well.

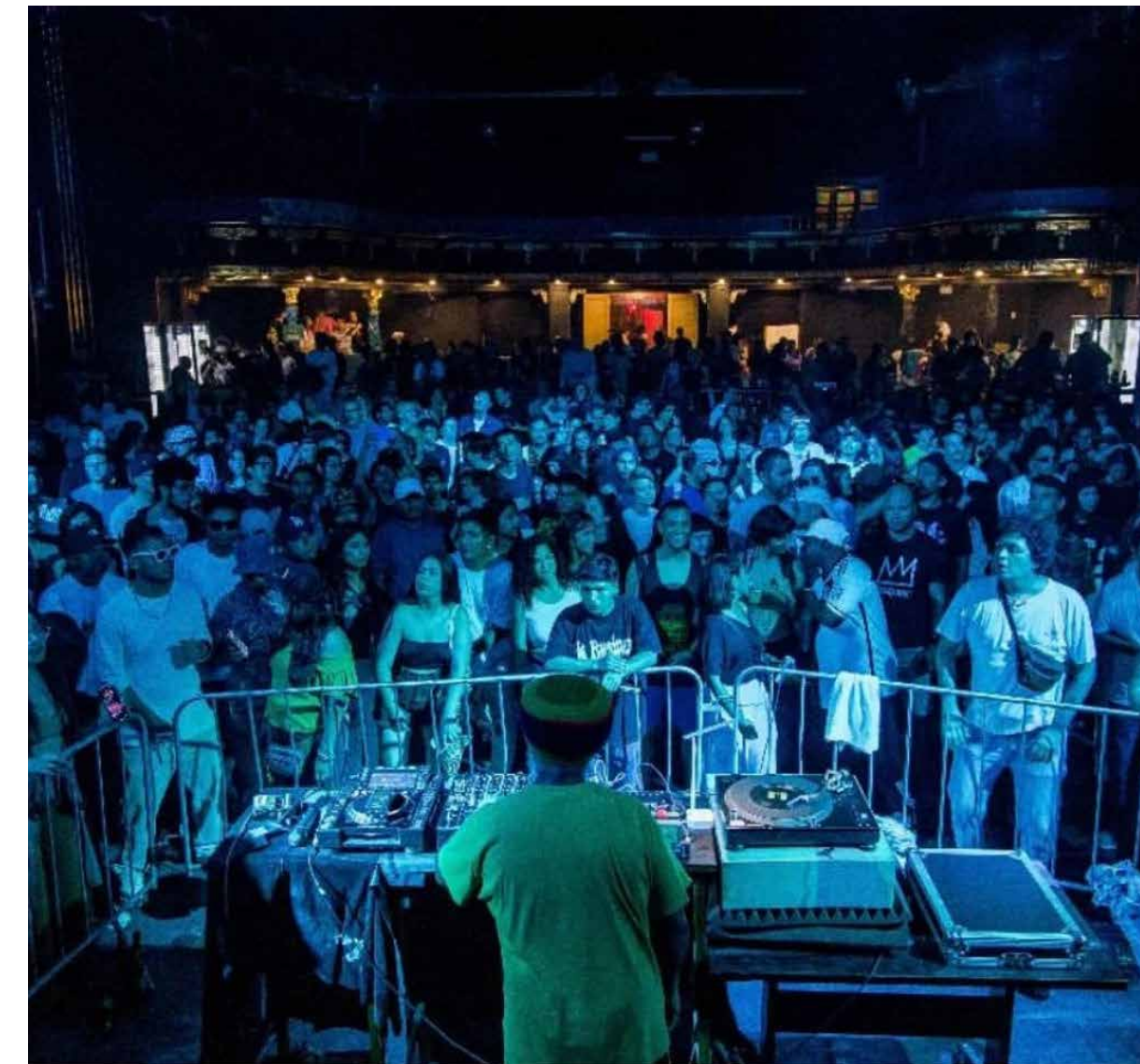
A key takeaway for the festival organisers was the reassurance gained from the training sessions. Adrián Leon noted that these sessions helped him realise that the challenges faced in producing Mar, Conciencia y Soundsystem were not unique but were shared by many other festivals across Latin America. This sense of commonality provided a calming effect, helping the organisers to navigate the complexities of festival production with greater confidence.

### Collaboration

The grant from Circular Culture was instrumental in bringing Channel One Soundsystem, a legendary name in the British Caribbean reggae scene, to Lima. Known as "the grandfather" of Sound System music, Channel One has been active since 1979 and holds a prominent position in the global dub-reggae community.

During their six-day stay in Lima, Channel One did more than just perform at the festival. They conducted a masterclass for 100 fans, musicians, and producers, sharing their extensive musical knowledge and experience. Additionally, they participated in a studio session with local musicians, creating a rich, collaborative atmosphere that extended beyond their performance.

Festival co-founder Adrián Leon emphasised the significance of this experience, stating, *"It was much more than a single performance; we had a whole experience with Channel One, it was great!"*



### Independently

As a festival that integrates music, culture and environmental advocacy, Mar, Conciencia y Soundsystem have implemented a number of actions aimed at reducing the environmental impact of the event. These initiatives include:

- **Vegan Food and Local Suppliers:**

The festival exclusively offered vegan food, reflecting a commitment to sustainability and highlighting Peru's gastronomy. Local vegan initiatives were invited to participate, further emphasising the festival's dedication to supporting local businesses and promoting healthy, sustainable food options.

- **Environmental Engagement:** The festival successfully brought together all major Peruvian environmental organisations dedicated to marine conservation. These organisations set up informative stands that educated attendees on the importance of protecting the sea and its diverse species. This engagement was a crucial aspect of the festival's mission to raise awareness about environmental issues.

- **Waste Management:** A comprehensive recycling system was implemented to ensure responsible waste management throughout the event. This initiative was in line with the festival's overarching goal of promoting environmental conservation.

### Sustainability Actions Adopted



### Festival de danza COCO Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

The COCO Dance Festival is the largest and longest-running contemporary dance festival in the English-speaking Caribbean. It offers a professional platform for performance and experimentation, supporting young choreographers and dancers with mentorship, workshops, and community outreach. The festival features works by leading local choreographers and partners with regional and international artists, showcasing talent from over ten countries, including Barbados and Latvia.

COCO is dedicated to making dance accessible to children and young people, nurturing emerging talent through various programmes and initiatives. Its mission is to enrich the dance community by inspiring and encouraging creativity and collaboration.

### Participation in the Circular Culture Programme

In 2023, the COCO Dance Festival participated in Circular Culture for the first time. The decision to apply was motivated by a peer recommendation and a connection with British-Trinidadian artist Bryony Benge-Abbott, whose focus on environmental themes aligned with the festival's interest in exploring these topics through dance.

Additionally, COCO faced internal funding challenges due to the underdeveloped ecosystem for cultural event funding in Trinidad and Tobago. Unlike events aligned with corporate social responsibility initiatives, dance festivals like COCO Dance often struggle to secure financial support, making external funding sources like Circular Culture especially valuable.

The COCO Dance team found the training sessions informative and well-organised, but they noted that the content was more relevant to large outdoor music festivals than to a smaller, niche festival like COCO Dance. They suggested that future sessions be more tailored to the specific needs of diverse festival types, including those focused on dance.

### Collaboration

The festival's collaboration with Bryony Benge-Abbott led to the screening of her experimental dance film, *The Colour of Transformation*, on the first night of the festival. This was followed by a collaboration with Trinidad and Tobago visual artist A k u z u r u. Together, they performed a piece titled *AIKHEMy Of Sound* on the steps of the theatre, responding to the themes explored in Benge-Abbott's film. This collaboration highlighted the importance of the natural environment and the role of Global Majority women in conservation efforts.

*"The collaboration was really powerful." Sonja Dumas*

The festival also hosted a panel discussion titled *The Colour of Transformation* after the festival, featuring panellists A k u z u r u, Ardene Sirjoo from the Cropper Foundation, and Akilah Jaramogi, an environmental activist managing the Fondes Amandes Reforestation Project. Moderated by Sonja Dumas, the discussion further explored the themes of environmental conservation and the intersection of art and activism.



The collaboration with international artists and the British Council significantly enhanced the festival's international profile, bolstering its credibility and future prospects for international funding. However, despite these benefits, the COCO Dance team does not foresee a substantial increase in investment or long-term financial stability resulting from their involvement in Circular Culture. The festival, which evolved from grassroots initiatives to a significant cultural tourism event, finds the grant amount and its limitations insufficient to address its broader financial needs.

### Transition to a Paperless Programme

One of the significant impacts of participating in Circular Culture was the COCO Dance Festival's transition to a paperless programme. Inspired by the programme's sustainability focus, COCO Dance shifted from printing physical programmes to using QR codes, aligning with environmentally friendly practices and achieving cost savings. However, the initiative faced technical challenges due to poor internet connectivity at the venue, which hindered attendees' ability to access the digital programme. This experience highlighted the need for improved infrastructure to effectively support sustainable initiatives in the future, though it is an initiative the team plan on taking forward.



### Festival Ascenso Caracas, Venezuela

Founded in October 2004, the Ascenso Festival is a prominent gathering for outdoor sports enthusiasts, including climbers, bikers, surfers, hikers, divers, and adventurers of all kinds. The festival is renowned for its focus on adventure and wildlife films, offering a unique platform for showcasing the profound connection between humans and nature. With its roots in a photography and adventure film competition, Ascenso Festival has continuously celebrated this interaction, creating reflection and awareness to preserve the environment—the most precious resource on Earth.

To date, the festival has attracted approximately 60,000 attendees, showcased over 350 videos and 4,000 photographs, and recognised more than 300 filmmakers and photographers for their contributions to the field.

#### Participation in the Circular Culture Programme

In 2023, Ascenso participated in Circular Culture for the first time, and its successful involvement led to selection for the 2024 edition as well. Although the festival had previously engaged in other partnerships with the British Council, this was their first experience the programme.

Festival manager and co-founder, Orlando Corona appreciated the training describing it as “nice and nutritious” due to the exchange of experiences with other festivals. However, he also expressed a desire for more tailored information that could be adapted to the specific needs of smaller festivals like Ascenso.

The funds from the programme were used to bring Keith Partridge, a distinguished adventure filmmaker and educator, to Venezuela. Partridge, an Emmy award-winning cameraman with over 70 extreme films to his name, has filmed in some of the most challenging environments on Earth, including Everest, the Amazon rainforest, and the Himalayas. He is also the author of the book *The Adventure Game*, which details his experiences and expertise in adventure filmmaking.



Partridge’s visit had a profound impact on the Ascenso community. Corona, described it as a “dream come true” to have Partridge in Caracas.

The opportunity to learn from such an experienced and generous teacher was invaluable for the festival’s participants, who are deeply passionate about both nature and technology. In a country facing political and economic challenges, having a figure of Partridge’s stature visit Venezuela instilled a sense of hope and confidence in better days ahead. Partridge was equally impressed by the dedication and enthusiasm of the students, expressing a desire to return to Venezuela in the future.

#### Sustainability Actions Adopted Independently

As a computer engineer, Corona has implemented various digital solutions to enhance the festival’s sustainability. Since its inception, the festival has aimed to connect people with nature, raising awareness about the importance of environmental protection. A key example of this commitment is the festival’s decision to eliminate printed materials, including invitations and programmes, for over 10 years. This shift to digital has significantly reduced the festival’s environmental footprint.

In addition to its focus on digital solutions, the Ascenso Festival takes great care in managing waste and recycling all materials used during the event. The festival also places a strong emphasis on water and energy management, ensuring that these resources are used responsibly and sustainably.

