



## ***Community Responses Collected April 2025 – March 2026***

### ***Prepared by Tug Hill Artist Network***

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **A Region Ready for Connection, Creativity, and Year-round Arts Experiences**

The Tug Hill Artist Network conducted a regional arts survey to understand who is participating in the arts, what kinds of events people want, and how an arts network can best support the creative ecosystem across Lewis County, Jefferson County, and the broader North Country. The findings reveal a region rich with artists, culture bearers, and arts curious residents who are ready for more consistent, visible, and connected arts offerings.

Respondents show strong interest in concerts, theatre, art exhibits, and hands on workshops, with many willing to travel 15–20 miles or more for compelling experiences. Facebook, social media, and word of mouth are the dominant communication channels, while email newsletters and local news sources play important supporting roles.

Artists represent a wide range of disciplines—visual arts, music, writing, fiber arts, pottery, dance, traditional arts, and more. Many sell their work through personal websites, storefronts, and informal channels. There is clear interest in a shared online marketplace and in person artist meetups.

Across the board, respondents emphasized the importance of affordability, reliable information, and opportunities for connection. Many expressed support for a dedicated arts publication or centralized calendar to help the community stay informed and engaged.



*The data points toward a year round music and performance ecosystem—festivals, series, jams, and neighborhood stages.*

— Survey respondent

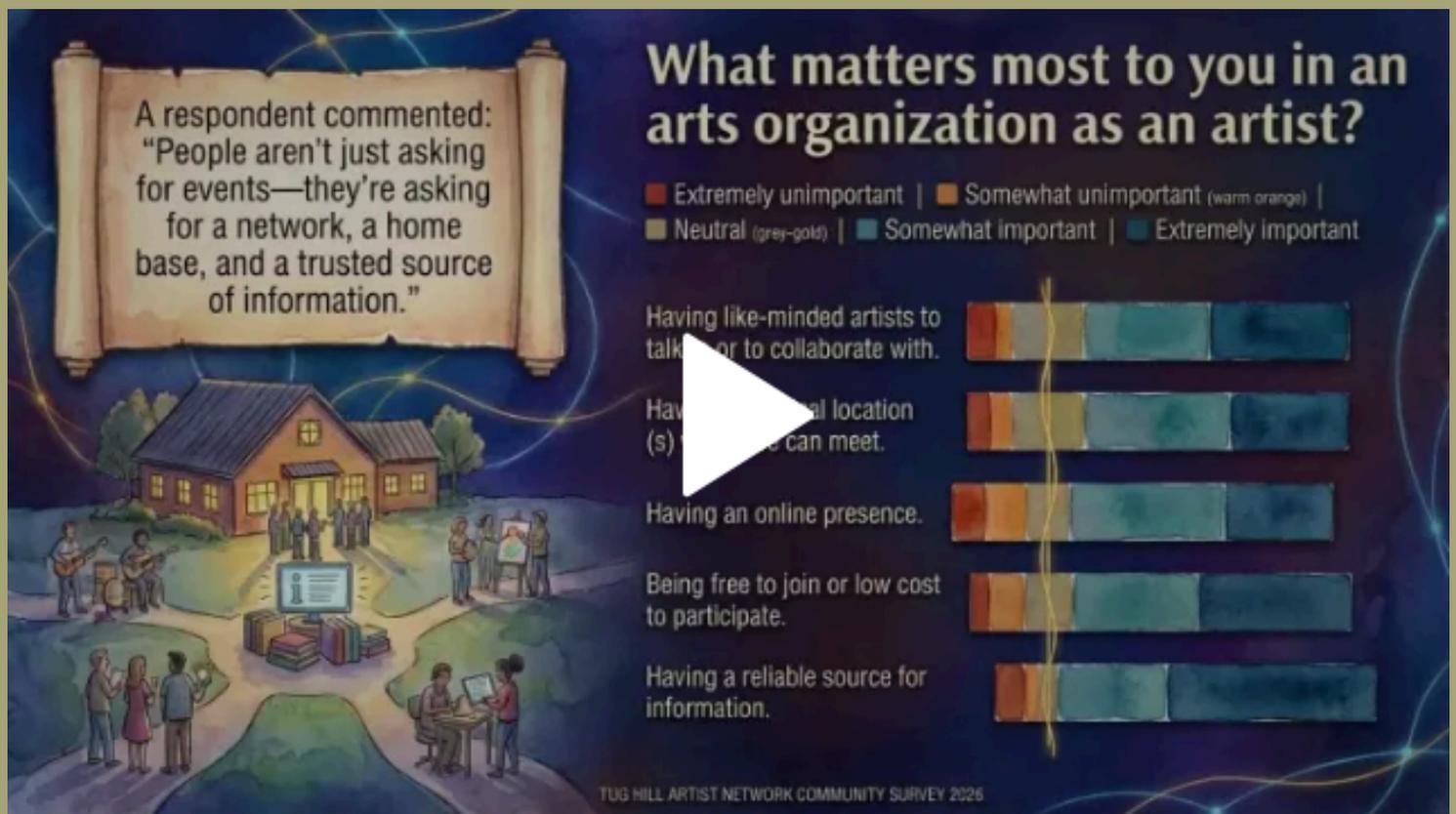


#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Tug Hill and North Country region is home to a vibrant but dispersed arts community. This survey was conducted to better understand arts engagement, needs, and interests across the region. The findings will guide the work of the Tug Hill Artist Network and its partners as they support local artists, expand access to arts experiences, and strengthen the region’s creative ecosystem.

## METHODOLOGY

- **Platform:** Microsoft Forms
- **Survey window:** April 2025 – March 2026
- **Total respondents:** 240
- **Average completion time:** 5 minutes, 55 seconds
- **Distribution:** Social media, email lists, partner organizations, word of mouth
- **Demographics:** Optional
- **Limitations:**
  - Self selection bias
  - Rural broadband access
  - Optional demographic questions reduce precision



## RESPONDENT PROFILE

### Gender

- 180 female
- 60 male

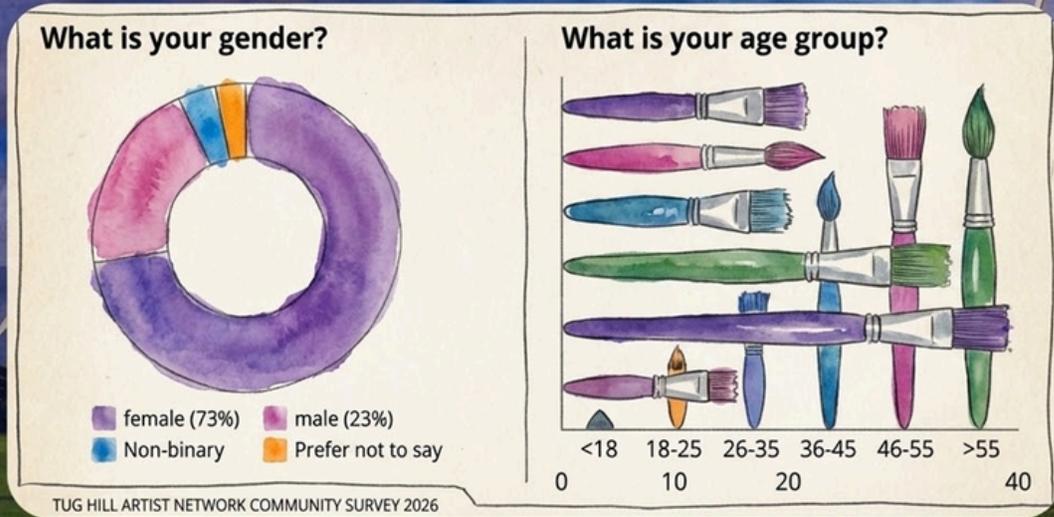
### Age Distribution

- 18–25: 6

- 26–35: 21
- 36–45: 42
- 46–55: 60
- 55+: 111

# AGE AND GENDER

Respondents skew older, with strong representation from adults 36+, especially 46–55 and 55+. The majority identify as women, with men also represented.



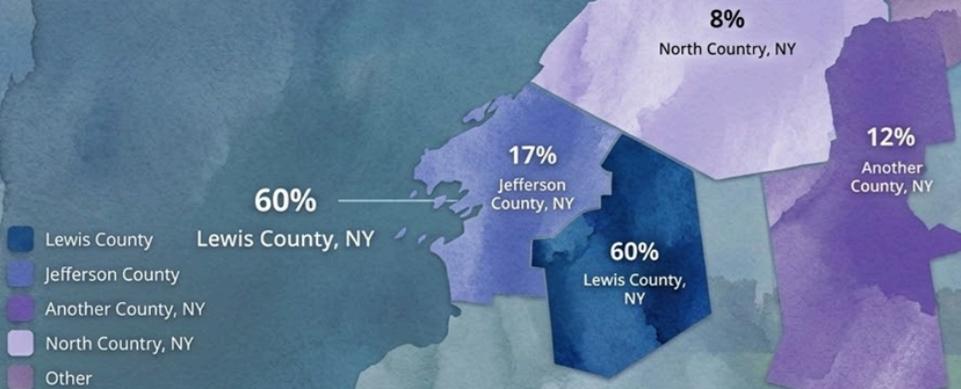
## Location

- Lewis County: 150
- Jefferson County: 36
- North Country: 18
- Other counties: 27
- Other: 9

# GEOGRAPHY

Most respondents live in Lewis County, with additional participation from Jefferson County, the broader North Country, and nearby counties.

## Where do you live?



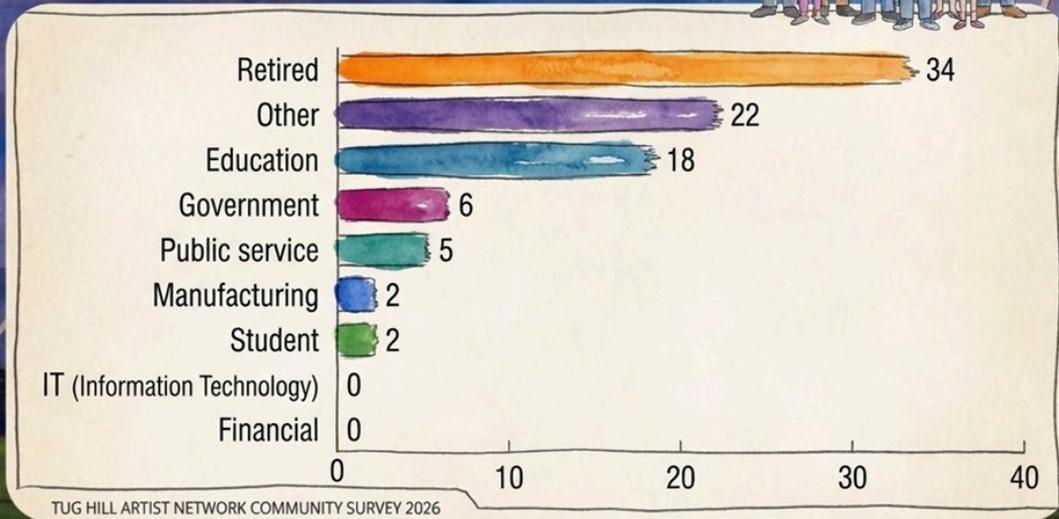
TUG HILL ARTIST NETWORK COMMUNITY SURVEY 2026

## Industries

- Retired: 9
- Education: 60
- Other: 66
- Government: 36
- Public service: 45
- Manufacturing: 12
- Student: 13

# INDUSTRIES

"This is a community of seasoned culture-bearers and working families who are ready for more arts, not less."



**Artist Identities--These are primary identities, some chose multiple arts categories.**

- Visual artists: 20
- Writers/poets: 40
- Musicians: 30
- Fiber arts: 18
- Traditional arts: 15
- Potters: 12
- Dancers: 6
- Other performing arts: 39

## Artists Thoughts . . .

Many selected multiple identities, reflecting a multi-hyphenate creative culture.



- Being interviewed for the Tug Hill Artist Network



- Attending in-person artist meetings



- Participating in a shared online marketplace



- Receiving updates and answering more questions

*“Artists want connection, visibility, and shared infrastructure that makes it easier to create here.”*

TUG HILL ARTIST NETWORK COMMUNITY SURVEY 2026

## ARTS PARTICIPATION & INTERESTS

Respondents expressed strong engagement with a wide range of arts experiences.

### Top Interests

- Concerts/music: 55
- Theatre: 50
- Art exhibits: 48
- Workshops/classes: 49
- Dances: 24

# ARTS AREAS OF INTEREST



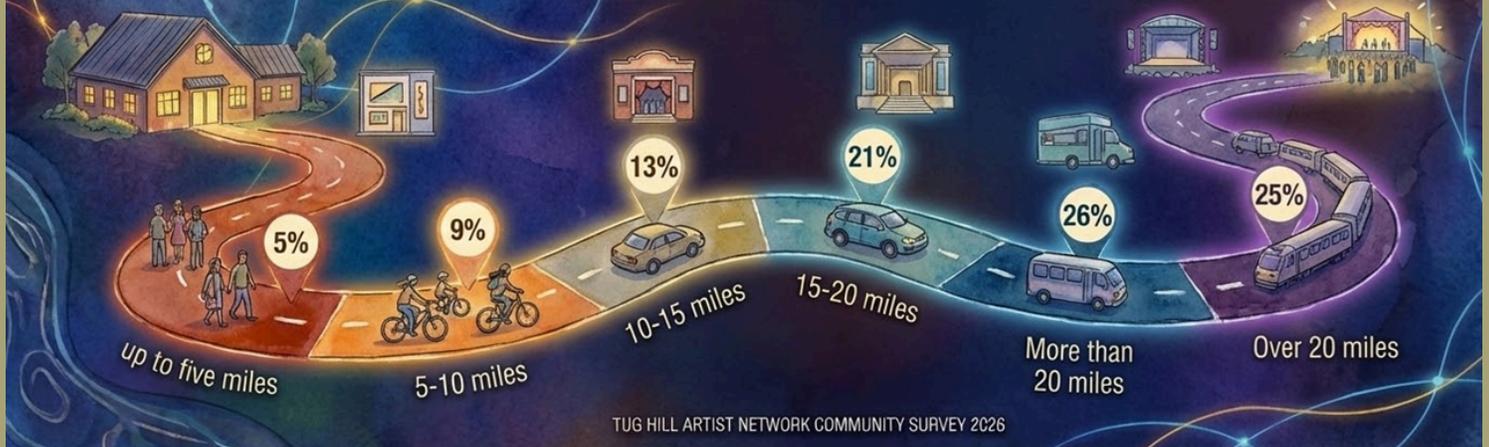
## Driving Distance Willingness

- Up to 5 miles: 30
- 5–10 miles: 28
- 10–15 miles: 27
- 15–20 miles: 63
- More than 20 miles: 92

# ARTS PARTICIPATION

Most people attend arts events monthly (27%) or seasonally, with a smaller group attending weekly (15%). Most are willing to drive at least 20 miles to attend an event.

What distance are you willing to drive to attend an arts event?



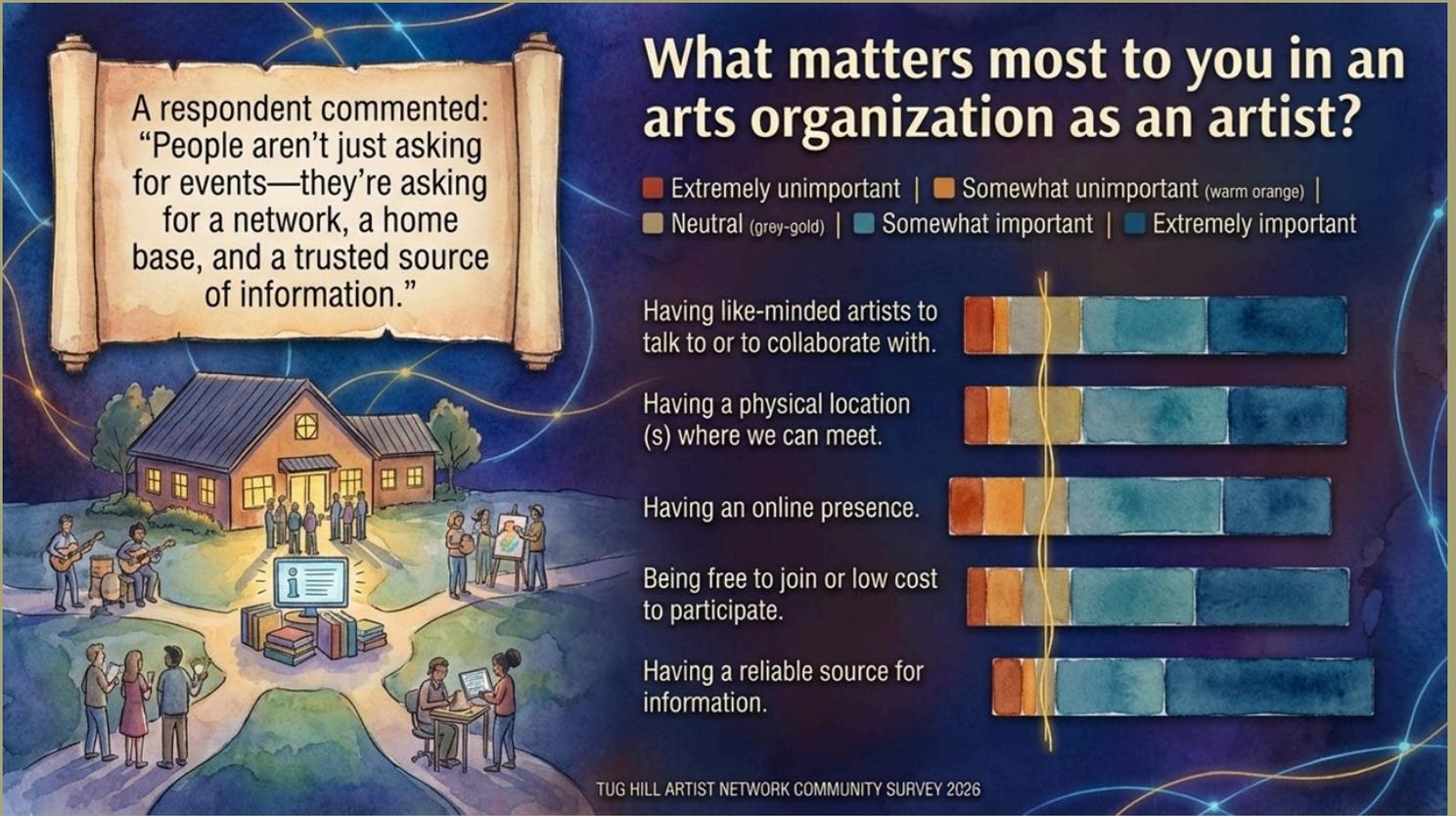
## Attendance Frequency

- Weekly: 36
- Monthly: 63
- Seasonal: 58
- Yearly: 30
- Never: 6
- Not sure: 45

## How People Learn About Arts Events--Some selected several

- Facebook: 180
- Social media (other): 180
- Word of mouth: 150
- Email marketing: 69
- Local news: 75
- Newsletters: 60
- TV/streaming ads: 50
- Radio: 31





**VENUE SPECIFIC INSIGHTS**

**Tug Hill Estate**

- Beautiful, accessible, well known
- Ideal for bluegrass, acoustic concerts, outdoor festivals, workshops
- Strong candidate for a **flagship venue**



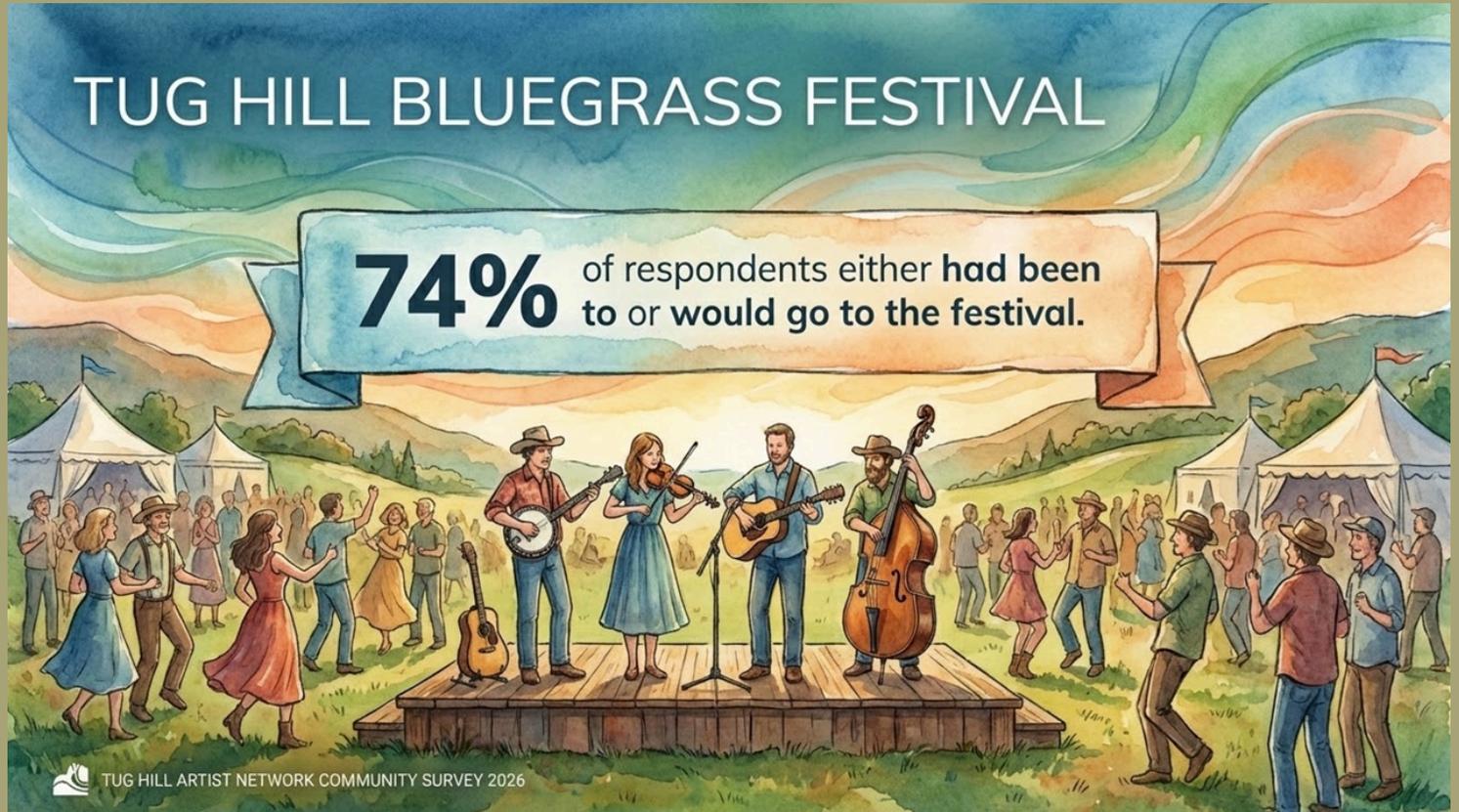
Tug Hill Estate is the community's preferred location for a revived bluegrass festival with more than 82% interested in attending if held at the Estate with high willingness to travel across the Tug Hill to do so. There is also a strong interest in bluegrass concerts and mixed-genre roots programming at the estate.

### Lowville Town Hall Theatre

- Beloved, historic, community centered
- Ideal for theatre, spoken word, film, acoustic concerts
- Strong **winter anchor venue**



## BLUEGRASS, TRADITIONAL MUSIC & PERFORMANCE INTERESTS



### Tug Hill Bluegrass Festival

- Past attendance: 60 yes / 180 no
- Would attend at Tug Hill Estate: 125 yes / 90 maybe / 42 no
- Preferred acts:
  - National: 30
  - Regional: 60
  - Local: 20
  - **Mixture:** 128
- Festival length preference:
  - One day: 65
  - Weekend: 55
  - series: 120

# BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL PREFERENCES

## MUSIC ACTS



When asked about the music, they said they prefer a mix of national, regional, and local acts, rather than exclusively local performers. This points to a desire for high-quality entertainment with regional relevance.

## FREQUENCY



When asked about scheduling, respondents said they would like either a weekend festival or longer or a series of Bluegrass concerts over the summer (75% respectively).

TUG HILL ARTIST NETWORK COMMUNITY SURVEY 2026

## Traditional Music & Dance

- Old Time jams: 46 yes / 46 maybe / 60 no
- Contra/square dance: 45 yes / 66 maybe / 114 no
- Jamming at Tug Hill Estates: 82 yes / 75 no
- Porchfest: 105 yes / 75 no

## Other Areas of High Interest

1

**Porchfest-style neighborhood performances**

2

**Contra and square dancing (more mixed, but notable)**

3

The data points toward a year-round music and performance ecosystem—festivals, series, jams, and neighborhood stages.”



## ARTIST SPECIFIC NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

### Sales Channels artists use

- Own storefront: 12
- Own website: 25
- Other organizations: 20
- Vendors: 50

# ARTIST AUDIENCES

“There is a clear appetite for shared infrastructure—both digital and in-person.”



TUG HILL ARTIST NETWORK COMMUNITY SURVEY 2026



• Overall, artists sell at craft fairs and markets at 50%



• some use personal websites



• their own storefronts



• other organizations' platforms, informal or local channels to sell or display their work.

*There is strong interest in a shared online marketplace for local art.*

## Marketplace Interest

- Sell online through shared site: 66 yes / 79 maybe

## Artists Network Engagement

- Join the network: 34 yes / 27 maybe
- Attend in person meetings: 28 yes / 21 maybe
- Be interviewed: 21 yes / 21 maybe

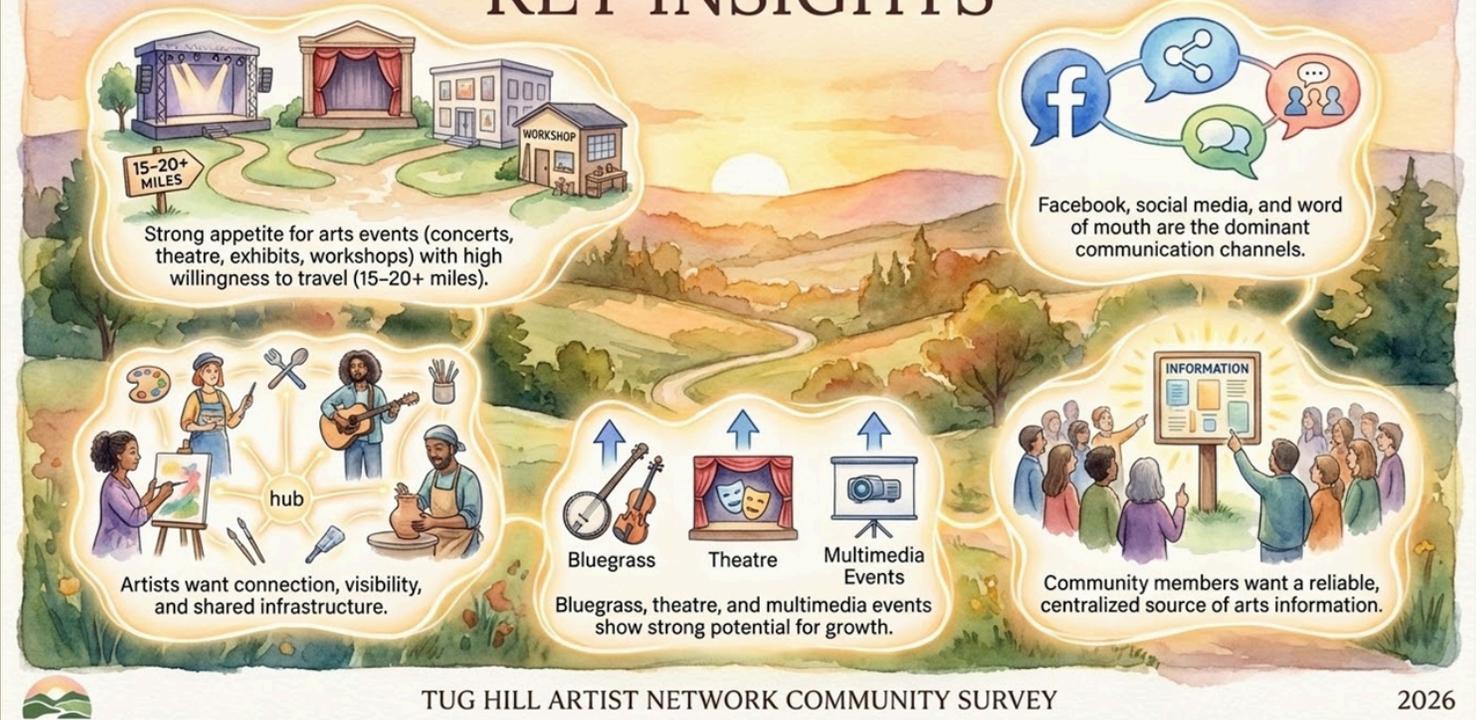
## BARRIERS & CHALLENGES

- Fragmented communication
- Transportation and distance
- Affordability concerns
- Limited winter friendly venues
- Artist isolation
- Lack of centralized information

## KEY FINDINGS

- Strong appetite for arts events—especially music, theatre, and workshops
- Affordability, information, and connection are top priorities
- Audience is willing to travel
- Artists want visibility and shared infrastructure
- Community wants a centralized calendar and publication
- Clear opportunity for a **year round performance arc**

# KEY INSIGHTS



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Establish a Regional Arts Calendar

A centralized, easy-to-share calendar for events, workshops, and opportunities.

### 2. Launch a Tug Hill Arts Publication

A monthly or seasonal digest featuring events, artist profiles, opportunities, and venue highlights.

### 3. Build a Shared Online Marketplace

A unified platform for local artists to sell work.

### 4. Develop a Year Round Performance Arc

Bluegrass series, theatre productions, Old-Time jams, Porchfest, open mic nights.

### 5. Revive the Tug Hill Bluegrass Festival (Multi-Venue Model)

Shared responsibility across multiple venues and partners.

### 6. Convene Artists Regularly

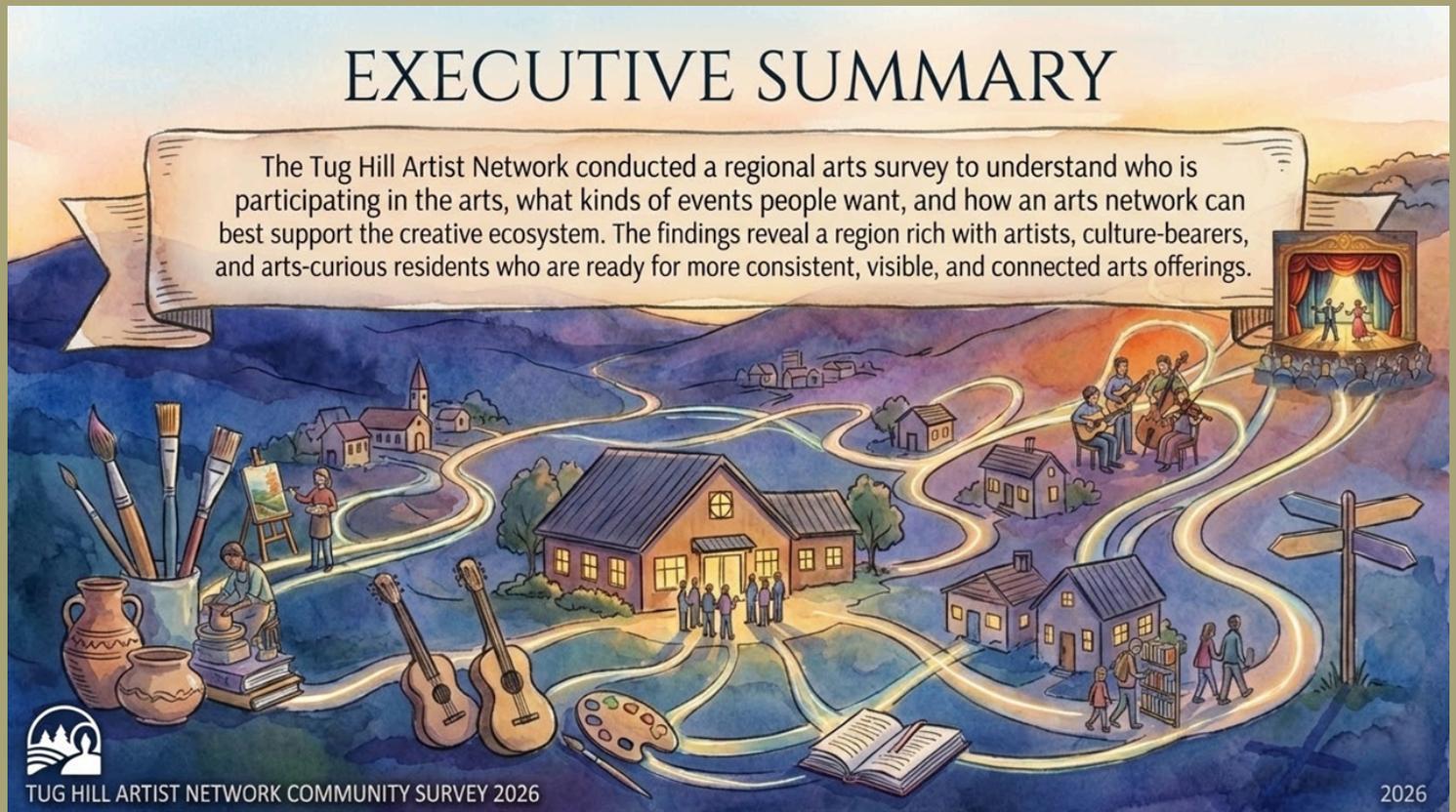
Quarterly meetups to build community and share resources.

### 7. Strengthen Communication Infrastructure

Coordinated messaging across Facebook, social media, email newsletters, and word of mouth.

## 8. Position organizations as Connectors

Link artists, venues, audiences, partners, educators, and local businesses in some way.



## CONCLUSION

The Tug Hill and North Country region is home to a vibrant, multidisciplinary arts community with strong interest in music, theatre, workshops, and collaborative creative experiences. Respondents are eager for more consistent programming, better communication, and opportunities to connect with one another. With strategic coordination, shared infrastructure, and year-round programming, the area would be well-positioned to strengthen the region's creative ecosystem and support artists and audiences alike.