

CHARTS MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

ANALYSIS REPORT - FEBRUARY 2026

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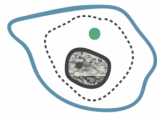
KEY DATA

65 Total Responses Feb 2026	95% Existing Members 62 of 65 respondents	71% Had Staff Contact strongest engagement point
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

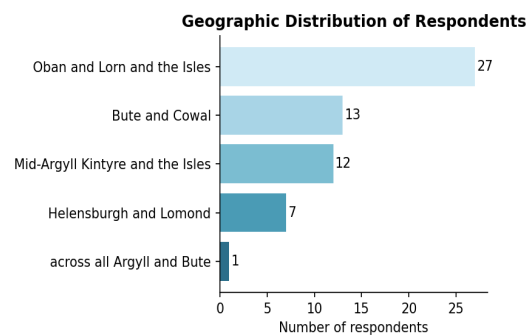
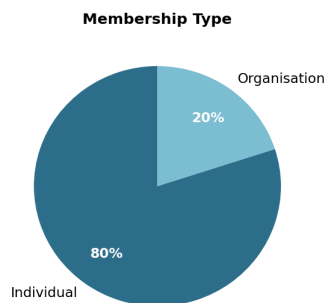
CHARTS received **65** responses to its February 2026 membership survey, 9% of CHARTS' membership. The majority (**95%**) are existing members and **71%** have had direct contact with staff, suggesting that personal relationships are currently the organisation's greatest asset, but also potentially a limiting factor in terms of dissemination and growth. **The survey presents a clear strategic question: given limited staff capacity, where should CHARTS concentrate its energy?** Members are not necessarily asking CHARTS to do more of everything. They are asking it to do specific things better and to be clearer about what it stands for.

A consistent thread running through the data is the importance of CHARTS fully owning its identity as a rural arts organisation. Although certain events will work better in certain locales, the key is to provide tailored support specific to the experience and needs of rural practitioners rather than generic support that can be found through other resources.



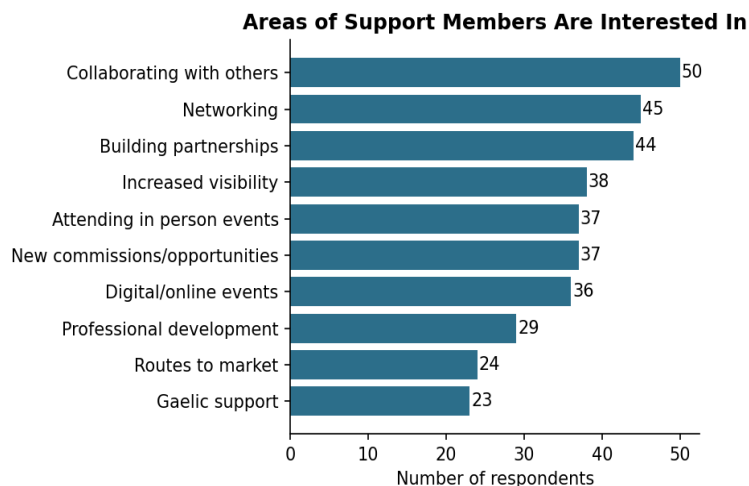
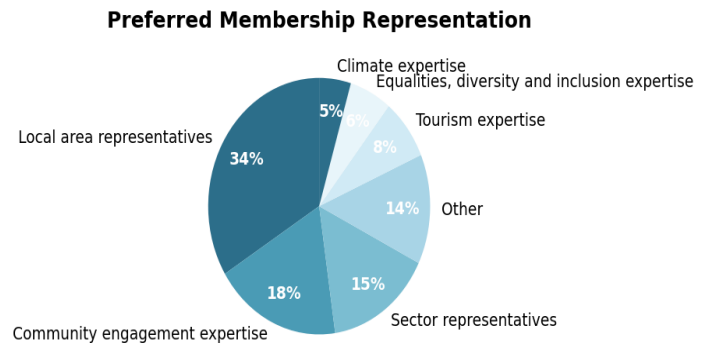
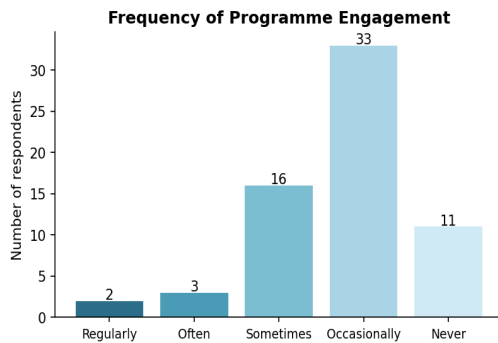
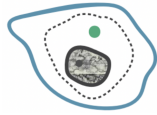
2. WHO RESPONDED

Respondents were 80% individual practitioners and 20% organisations, drawn primarily from Oban and Lorn (42%), Bute and Cowal (20%) and Mid-Argyll and Kintyre (18%). The membership skews older - 57% aged 45-65, 18% aged 65+, which reflects the demographic reality of rural Argyll rather than a failure of outreach. Younger practitioners are reached through targeted funding schemes such as VACMA, but rural-to-urban migration means retaining them as long-term members is a structural challenge beyond CHARTS' direct control. An older, more established membership also brings significant experience, and a few members have mentioned a willingness to share skills - an asset the organisation can actively draw on.



3. ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

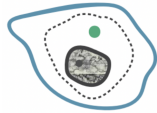
Programme engagement is predominantly occasional (51% once or twice a year; 17% never). Website visits and social media follow the same pattern. Direct staff contact is the clear exception at 71%, reinforcing that in the current format, human relationships are where CHARTS' membership value is felt most strongly (delivered both online and in-person). Organisations are notably less connected to governance structures: over half have never participated in a Steering Group meeting, and several show very limited awareness of CHARTS' work overall, suggesting some have effectively drifted to lapsed status.



4. KEY THEMES FROM MEMBER FEEDBACK

Communication

The single most requested improvement from individuals and organisations alike is a regular monthly email newsletter. A significant minority of members describe having received no communication from CHARTS in years. This is passive drift through the absence of contact, not active disengagement. A consistent newsletter, once established, addresses the most common barrier at low ongoing staff cost, whilst ensuring members are aware of it and signed up. CHARTS already has a monthly newsletter with over 2,000 subscribers, however it seems that current members may not be aware/receiving it. (NOTE that CHARTS membership as of April 1 2026 is 729 half the amount of subscribers). More prominent sign-up prompts across the website, at events and in direct member communications would help close this gap at minimal



cost. Social media, particularly Facebook, is also flagged by younger members as an important channel.

"I have not had communication from CHARTS for years despite having a profile with them. I had to remind myself what CHARTS was."

LOCAL CONNECTION AND GEOGRAPHIC EQUITY

Members outside Oban consistently describe CHARTS as feeling distant, geographically and culturally. **Helensburgh and Lomond is the most acute case:** 5 of 7 respondents have had no staff contact, events are perceived as concentrated in the west and north, and the community feels excluded. Island members describe a persistent disconnect, and Kintyre members want local events. The ask is not for CHARTS to fund and deliver everything locally, as several responses suggest a facilitation model, where CHARTS supports member-led gatherings rather than organising centrally. This is both more sustainable resource wise, and more likely to build genuine local networks that CHARTS can leverage whilst reaching all areas.

"Perhaps focus on bringing local heritage members together rather than delivering specific training. If gaps come to light, consider delivering that."

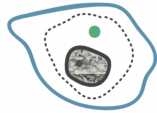
BREADTH OF SECTOR COVERAGE

CHARTS is perceived as primarily serving visual artists and craft makers. Writers, musicians, theatre practitioners and heritage professionals all describe feeling underserved. This raises a genuine strategic question about identity and the scope of CHARTS going forward. **The Gaelic programme is consistently praised as a model of targeted, well-delivered segment that reaches people actively seeking it.** The question is whether CHARTS can apply that model to other underserved disciplines without overstretching a small staff team.

"Live theatre seems to be on the decline in Argyll. I would like to see CHARTS engaging with members interested in theatre."

FACILITATION VS. DIRECT SUPPORT

Members are clear that generic professional development is not what they need. The most experienced practitioners push back explicitly, noting they need funding and opportunities, not training. The consistent asks are: funding application support and grant writing; the business of sustaining a rural creative practice (pricing, contracts, income streams); peer exchange and



knowledge sharing between practitioners (distinct from formal networking); and digital skills and routes to market.

Organisations want CHARTS to convene rather than deliver, signposting existing provision in other organisations and only stepping in where genuine gaps emerge, which notably may be for areas specific to rural practitioners. Several individual members have also offered to share their own expertise, which CHARTS could tap into as a low-cost way of expanding its offer.

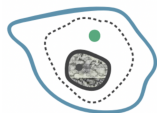
AWARENESS GAP

Individual development and business goals -a core CHARTS activity - is known to only 40% of individual members. Local area development: 27%. Modern Apprenticeships: 15%. Members are asking for support in areas CHARTS is already active. Making existing work more visible through better communications could address significant member needs without any new programme development.

5. INDIVIDUALS VS ORGANISATIONS — KEY DIFFERENCES

While many themes are shared, individuals and organisations have meaningfully different needs and engagement patterns. The table below summarises the key distinctions drawn from the full survey analysis.

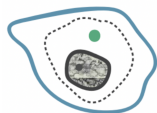
Area	Individuals (n=52)	Organisations (n=13)
Top support interests	Collaborating, networking, commissions, visibility	Building partnerships, research & reports, in-person events
Support received	Events & networking (51%), paid opportunities (47%), staff support (41%)	Staff support, finding opportunities, visibility (all ~42%); paid opportunities low (17%)
Support wanted	Local meet-ups, funding help, mentoring, commissions, broader sector coverage	Convening across sector, capacity building, governance, heritage activities



Development needs	Funding applications, business of being an artist, peer exchange, digital/routes to market	Signpost existing training rather than deliver; governance, tourism context, residency development
Representation preference	Local area reps (37%), community engagement expertise (23%)	Local area reps and tourism expertise (both 23%), climate expertise (15%)
Governance engagement	62% have participated in some form of Steering Group activity	54% have never participated; several have limited awareness of CHARTS overall
Digital engagement	Low - social media occasional (50%), website rarely visited; prefer email	Slightly more consistent; assume newsletter will cover their needs; website not a priority
Key barrier to engagement	Communication absence, geographic distance, perceived visual arts bias	Feeling peripheral, short notice events, lack of communication, confidence in some cases

6. STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

✓ Strengths	△ Areas for Development
Staff relationships - responsive, knowledgeable, valued	Communications - many members feel invisible
VACMA - widely known and consistently praised	Website speed and profile page functionality
Gaelic programme — well-targeted, praised as a model	Coverage beyond visual arts/craft



Website design - clean, navigable, professional	Geographic reach — islands, Kintyre, Helensburgh
Events and networking when they happen	Visibility of existing work members don't know about

7. STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

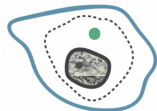
Members want more local presence, broader sector coverage, better communications, and more practical support. CHARTS is a small organisation with limited staff and budget. Doing more of everything is not viable. The more useful question is: what does CHARTS do that no other organisation in Argyll does (identify a USP!), and how can it do that more effectively?

Should CHARTS consolidate and deepen what is already working, or deliberately broaden to serve underrepresented disciplines and geographies? The evidence suggests both are needed - but likely not simultaneously to avoid spreading too thin.

A free membership model currently keeps entrance accessible, expectations manageable and gives CHARTS flexibility. One respondent suggested a tiered or modest fee could strengthen organisational capacity and broaden the offer - but any move in that direction would need to sit alongside a clear and compelling articulation of what membership delivers in value. The current survey suggests that for a meaningful minority, that case is not yet being made.

DESIRED ACTIONS HIGHLIGHTED BY MEMBERS:

- Increase awareness of the existing monthly newsletter among members - with over 2,000 subscribers it is a strong asset. Add prominent sign-up prompts to the website, at all events, and in direct member outreach.
- Audit existing programme communications as members are asking for things CHARTS already does. Better or more targeted promotion of Individual Development, Local Area Development and Modern Apprenticeships could close the awareness gap without new resourcing.



**CULTURE, HERITAGE & ARTS
ASSEMBLY.**
ARGYLL & ISLES

- Pilot member-led local meet-ups in Helensburgh and Lomond and Kintyre, with CHARTS providing light facilitation.
 - Introduce a bookable funding surgery or drop-in session with staff - the most consistent ask across both individuals and organisations.
 - Re-engage lapsed organisational members directly and personally, and review the Steering Group model to make participation more accessible and relevant.
 - Begin a listening/discovery exercise with underrepresented communities - writers, musicians, theatre practitioners before making any programming decisions about broadening the offer.
 - Consider an annual in-person gathering, co-hosted with member organisations
 - Review whether the member profile directory model is fit for purpose, or if it needs a new angle – what is the primary goal of the website and how are organisations with similar goals approaching this?
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