

Voices from the Field Report

Project 560 Programme Review 2025

By Winnu D

India Foundation for the Arts, IFA, has supported and implemented arts and culture projects across the country since 1993. Since 2013, they have made a concerted effort to deeply engage with the arts and culture in Bangalore, where their offices are, through Project 560. IFA undertakes periodic reviews of their grants in order to respond and restructure them in accordance with the evolving needs of stakeholders. This report is part of a review of the Project 560 Programme undertaken in 2025.

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Introduction

Project 560

Since 2018, Project 560 has had three categories of grants—Neighbourhood Engagements, Arts Projects (Practice and Research) and Curated Artistic Engagements. Neighbourhood Engagements is a grant of Rs. 35,000 for citizens, with or without an arts background, to curate a locally rooted event or series of events. Arts Projects (Research and Practice) is a grant of Rs. 4,00,000 for artists and scholars engaging creatively with the city. Curated Artistic Engagements is a grant of Rs. 5,00,000 for artists and curators to implement a series of artistic and cultural engagements in Bangalore. From 2018 to 2025, Project 560 has been supported by Sony Picture Entertainment Fund and BNP Paribas India Foundation, and some projects have been part-supported by Infosys Foundation.

Since 2018, there have been a total of 50 grants given out under the Project 560: 24 grants under Neighbourhood Engagements, 20 under Arts Projects and six Curated Artistic Engagements. The duration of the projects has ranged from two months to 18 months. These projects have covered a wide array of subjects, been located across the city and used various methods and methodologies.

Methodology

For this report, a number of stakeholders—grantees and artists, as well as scholars, activists, science communicators and hobbyists active in the city—were asked about how Project 560 could be strengthened, through changes to the programme/grant itself and how information about existing systems is disseminated, to support art that is more responsive to the priorities and preoccupations of the residents of Bangalore, including its artists. Conversations focused on impressions of art in Bangalore, the concerns of various communities in the city, the concerns of artists, the needs and possibilities of arts and culture, as well as specific impressions of Project 560 and/or IFA. The conversations also explored how Project 560 could reach out to a diversity of artists and audiences, and respond to inequalities in the city in how projects are allocated and what the projects engage with. Apart from the interviews, the research also draws from two roundtable consultations organised by IFA, conversations with IFA members, and information on its website.

Overview

IFA's consistent presence in Bangalore over the last three decades has made it a central institution in the city's arts and culture. Being an IFA grantee/Project Coordinator is "a mark of quality" for artists and for audiences. The majority of the respondents (all but one) had some degree of familiarity with IFA and the breadth of projects it supports. However, familiarity with the components of Project 560, and how they are distinct from IFA's other programmes, was low. Multiple respondents expressed appreciation for the reflectiveness evidenced by IFA having review processes.

Only two respondents could identify Project 560 and its components. Thus, while it might be possible to infer that impressions of people based in Bangalore might be predominantly of

efforts through Project 560, this is not a distinction or a specification that the respondents made. Rather, they spoke of IFA generally. While the report makes an attempt to make recommendations specific to Project 560, in the interviews, except in the case of two respondents recommending an increase in the project amount for Neighbourhood Engagements, there was no information that was specifically, or only, about Project 560 or its components. In several cases, respondents who had not interacted with IFA for the past few years refrained from commenting on IFA itself, and shared generally about Bangalore, arts and funding. These points have been included not as feedback for Project 560, but as general needs of artists and from the arts in Bangalore that could influence its priorities since this is its sphere of operation.

The responses reflected a diversity of ideas about the role of art in the city, and what is seen as ‘urban’ art. However, all responses viewed art as critical to the city, and to the ways in which residents interact with the city and each other. The ways of engaging with art in the city and what art gets (or is seen to get) support—be it funding, audiences or prestige—was seen as a barometer of what is prioritised, and an indicator of the trajectory of Bangalore.

Nearly all respondents felt, though from different positions, that the city, the artists in the city, and arts in the city, functions in bubbles. The reasons varied and included language, cultural and demographic differences, length of stay in the city, exclusionary class and caste systems, infrastructure and the design (or lack thereof) of the city, and the economics and definitions of art itself. The flipside of this assessment was the expression of a strong need for community and connection, a desire to know the city and each other better.

There is a need for supportive systems, collectivising (among artists and citizens), and for decentralised hubs. These connections could alleviate the economic precariousness of art through community and collaborative practices, and create better art as the artists are interacting with, and being challenged to create art for, a more diverse audience. For audiences, this would invite more people in as art speaks to them, and consequently art can also be a meeting point for otherwise isolated demographics. Given the critical role that culture and arts play in the fabric of a community, such projects could foster a more connected neighbourhood and city.

While some of these falls squarely within the mandate of Project 560, not all of the needs expressed can, or even should, be addressed by it. However, given its importance in the arts space in Bangalore, the fact that IFA has maintained that position where others have not been able to, the broader impressions can feed into how Project 560 directs its interventions.

The report below looks into more detail at the various understandings of urban art, of the concerns about Bangalore, why people value art and what they expect from it, the needs and role of the artist, and finally, the needs from, and role of, arts funding and recommendations for addressing some of these through Project 560.

Interviews

	Name	Details	Medium	Language
1	Nisha Abdullah	Theatre maker	Video call	English
2	Masoom Parmar	Dancer	Video call	English
3	Madhu Bhusan	Activist	Video call	English
4	Anuradha HR	Theatre practitioner	Phone call	English
5	Sammitha Srivathsa	Dance practitioner	Video call	English
6	Sarasija Subramanian	Visual Artist	Email	English
7	Ceejo Cyriac	Architect	Video call	English
8	Nandita Jayaraj	Science communicator, journalist, author	Video call	English
9	Anisha Tavaag	Dancer	Video call	English
10	Dr Alim Shaukatali Chandani	Enable India	Video call	ISL, with Surbhi Taneja interpreting
11	Maitri Gopalkrishan	Theatre, mental health	Video call	English
12	Ganapathy BP	Visual Arts	Video call	English
13	Ekta Mittal	Activism/Community	Phone call	English
14	Nimi Ravindran	Theatre	Video call	English
15	Rohit Kulkarni	Urban Sketchers	Video call	English
16	CF John	Visual artist	Phone call	English
17	Mohit Mahato	Visual arts	Video call	English
18	Shilpa Mudbi	Film maker, musician	Phone call	English
19	Lakshman KP	Theatre	Video call	English
20	Bindu Malini	Singer	Video call	English
21	Shridhar Hegde	Yakshagana artist	Phone call	English
22	Zac O'Yeah	Writer	Email	English
23	Bhumika Kulkarni	Journalist	Phone call	English

Bangalore

This section gives an overview of the primary impressions of Bangalore: of a city that is rapidly changing, the impact of the demographic changes, and the disappearance of greenery and third spaces; a city that is mired in all the effects of a large informal and gig economy; and a city that has expanded drastically but failed to build supporting infrastructure.

Changing cityscape

Bangalore is constantly changing, in its demographics, cultures, languages, boundaries, ecology, climate, and, as one respondent said, its soundscape. It has a large migrant population, with native Kannada speakers hovering around 40% of the population since 1991. A majority of its residents feel alienated: the migrant and transitory population doesn't view Bangalore as theirs, a place to put down roots; the local Kannada speaking population feel a loss of their language and practices. This will only get worse, a theatre maker says, "with AI coming in, everybody is going to be threatened, there is going to be more mistrust, crime rates are going to go up because of lack of jobs, economically corporations are going to perform better and people are not going to be as economically strong."

Several respondents raised concerns about the **changes in the cityscape** and rapid unplanned urbanisation. Each landmark lost to road widenings and other infrastructure projects is a loss of a part of the city's history. The loss of greenery is perceived not just as an ecological change, but an indicator of a fundamental change to the culture of Bangalore.

While there are real changes, the experience of exclusion and loss is exacerbated by divisive forces such as political manipulation and social media algorithms. The idea of a golden past and of a **vanishing 'culture'** of the city mentioned by some respondents begs the question of what, and whose, culture and art is recognised, and who is given, or assumes, the authority to declare it as such. These divisions in art and audiences reflect broader patterns of the city.

Multiple respondents mentioned how **third spaces are vanishing** in Bangalore. Access to and activities in parks, community centres, and fields are restricted and scrutinised. A visual artist noted that when people gather to draw in public, especially at archaeological sites, they are regarded with suspicion. Third spaces—spaces where people can gather, loiter, and exist in, which are not school, work, home or religious, for *aaram* and *majja* (play and rest)—are critical to experiences of community and belonging. The loss of commons disproportionately affects vulnerable groups who do not have access to private communal spaces, and reflects the priorities of power. For example, while the restrictions on activities in Cubbon park disturb many residents, they have been particularly disruptive to working class queer people for whom it used to be a cruising area. The crackdown on protests, a right that is constitutionally protected but against the comfort of those in power, is another example. These restrictions also influence where artists can gather, and what kind of art can be shown, but art can also create third spaces, as a theatre maker said.

Precarious economics

With the rise of the **gig economy**, economic interactions have become more unstable and unequal. Gig workers and migrant workers contend with precarious employment, while the

urban rich that they cater to are largely disconnected from this reality. Children of migrant workers are a particularly vulnerable demographic. An arts organiser spoke of how “there is no dignity of the working class”. The roundtable conversation also touched on the insecurity of housing and lack of facilities to support slums.

A theatre maker theorised that the shift away from long-term employment has created an economic system that is more temporary and transactional, and less trusting and that this has spilled over into other social interactions, and the arts.

Infrastructure and transport

Another common concern about Bangalore was **infrastructure and transport**. The number of unfinished and subquality infrastructure projects is seen as a result of corruption of government agents and contractors. A musician highlighted the investment in large Volvo buses, though most roads are narrow, as an example of spending without planning. An arts organiser noted that residents are ghettoised by class, caste, and religion, and access to public infrastructure and civic amenities is determined by each of these factors. This hierarchy of access is reflected in, for example, where waste is collected first and most frequently. The infrastructure of the city promotes consumption; gatherings like Ragi Kanna were appreciated for being a gathering point where people can collectively explore ways to live more ethical, eco-friendly lives.

The lack of reliable public transport and travel time limits engagement with events, including arts, in other parts of the city. Respondents mentioned a frustration with events, artistic and otherwise, that are held in ‘one end’ of the city. While the state of infrastructure in the city leaves much to be desired, whether a particular location is accessible depends not only on availability of public transport and facilities, but on what is defined as the **centre of the city**. What is ‘one end’ for one person is someone else’s neighbourhood. And in a city as densely populated and vast as Bangalore, even the ‘centre’ is not accessible to everyone.

Art

Art should be accessible to create, learn about, and view so that we can, as one musician said, “journey every aspect of **life through art**”. This section explores the impressions that respondents shared of art in urban spaces, and specifically in Bangalore, the role that art can and does play in making and remaking the fabric of a community; the exclusionary nature of dominant aesthetics and practices; and the central role of art in addressing social, health, community and civic needs. Recommendations and points of reflection based on these impressions can be found at the end of the section.

Urban Art

In Bangalore, and any city, many streams gather, making it fertile ground for intersectional artistic inquiry, between art forms and between art and other disciplines. There is a rich culture of music, literature, dance, carnival-like festival celebrations, and more. A common thread through the conversations was the continuum between arts, culture and ways of living and celebration; this is reflected in the work that IFA supports and implements.

There is a sense that there is a lot of art in Bangalore and audiences are unable to attend all the events, due to clashes in timings, the time and cost of travel, as well as a lack of publicity for events in certain venues, like Taralabalu Kendra in RT Nagar, that may not be what immediately comes to mind when thinking of the ‘arts scene’ in the city. Many works of art that the respondents connected to were those that chronicled the forgotten or sidelined **histories and stories of the city**.

A dominant understanding of ‘urban arts’ is of the **visual art in public spaces** such as murals and graffiti under flyovers or at metro stations. Exclusionary design of arts spaces, both real and perceived, is one possible reason for this idea. Some respondents mentioned how what is seen as ‘real art’ is contained in walled off areas like galleries, which only “informed individuals” will know about, “but the streets, like at Chitra Sante, can be for people and not just for cars.” This art is valued for its role in beautifying the cityscape, as well as for taking up themes that connect to the city, such as the Yakshagana mural outside Cantonment Station, or the murals by the Aravani Arts project at the metro stations. However, a concern is whether these visual representations translate to engagement with the subject of the arts. Artists were more likely to describe the whole spectrum of art created in the city as ‘urban art’. IFA’s projects reflect this broader understanding.

There is a long tradition of carnival-like celebrations tied to prominent festivals like Ganesha as well as more local festivals that include music, dance, and art. These events, a long-time resident of Bangalore observed, are getting grander and gathering more attention, influenced by social media and politics. While politics was not a theme of the interviews, there were references to the political climate through the mention of increasing scrutiny, only ‘certain kinds of art’ being able to exist in public spaces, and the crackdown on protests. There seems to be a kind of pervasive awareness and accounting of the political situation by artists and residents.

The **pandemic** has, unsurprisingly, changed the arts scene. However, the perception of what this shift is—an increase or decrease in attending performance, quality and quantity of art being made, etc.—differed among respondents.

Respondents pointed to the false dichotomy between **urban and rural arts**, people and culture. The continuums and interdependencies between what is defined as ‘Bangalore’ and the adjoining geographies needs to inform how the ‘urban’ is defined. A theatre maker pointed out that as the migrant population grows, there are many stories that may not have started in Bangalore, but are now woven into the city. A Yakshagana artist brought attention to how arts from rural areas are more likely to be performed in urban centres than in other rural spaces and Bangalore, as the primary urban centre of the state, is a **meeting point** for arts from other parts of the state and from other states. Festivals like Experimenta by Shai Heredia that bring together artistic output from faraway spaces also exist primarily in cities. While Project 560 primarily imagines how arts interventions could impact Bangalore and its residents, given the porous nature of these boundaries and definitions, as well as their interdependence, it could also imagine how the arts in Bangalore inform and are informed by arts in other parts of the state, and people who may not be defined as ‘Bangalorean’.

While Bangalore is a gathering point, the **‘urban’ is not one entity**. A musician mentioned how musicians of one region of Bangalore get a certain kind of resources and access while those in another do not—this also reflects the separation of neighbourhoods by caste and class. The city is made of several different areas all with very different demographics, practices, networks and concerns. Especially as the city expands, the boundaries that are drawn around the city do not reflect the boundaries of the stories contained in it, nor are they a measure of uniformity within the city. Some spaces are ‘saturated’ with arts, and there are localities where people have never seen a play.

Inclusion

Access to arts education, arts venues, and art making is limited by exclusive and exclusionary practices and impressions from entry fee, to the aesthetics, architecture, events, policies, and audience culture. This is due to casteist, linguistic, cultural, ableist and economic **exclusionary practices**. A theatre maker shared how venues, both private and government-run, prohibit non-vegetarian food, restrict certain actions and call their spaces ‘sacred’ or ‘temples’ of art. This is an extension of how public spaces are shaped by the class and caste-based notions of culture by those in power.

There was **no venue uniformly identified as accessible** or inaccessible. This points to the broader issue of most people feeling isolated from ‘other’ groups within the city. There is an impression of arts and venues being by and for a closed circle from a gentrified demographic. The people at each event seemed to know each other and even in spaces that are ostensibly free to access, those who do not fit into the cultural, social and economic bracket of the dominant audience immediately stand out and feel like outsiders. Some public venues such as Ravindra Kalakshetra were described as more accessible and inviting a more mixed audience, but even government run venues have become inaccessible except through connections. However, the influence is not just one way: the kind of **art and artists that exist in a space also have the power to shape its use and function**.

Language can both unify and exclude and is a major inflection point in Bangalore. Many languages are spoken here: Kannada, Tamil, Hindi, Bihari, Dakhni, Malayalam, English, and more. Language is laden with caste, class and religious identities, which art has the capacity to reach beyond; though art and aesthetics are also rooted in and reflective of these divisions. A lot of the highly funded work, according to one theatre maker, is in English, but art has to be, another theatre maker said, multilingual, because each language “carries a culture” with it. This culture is nurtured not when people translate work into it, but when it is the language of operation, when art, ideas and politics are imagined in the language. The language of imagination of a project can flip the power equations, as a theatre maker found when they chose to direct a play in the language of the children who were performing rather than their own.

The reliable provision of sign language interpretation at MAP, the inclusion of information in braille by some museums, or even how a certain Yakshagana troupe has reduced dialogues in their performance and used other kinds of expression to create performances that transcended language barriers, are all examples of how art can include more people.

Art can be “an **inclusive and welcoming space** where fraternity can be practiced”, as one theatre maker says. It can model constitutional morality and secularism—a secularism of plurality and incorporating differences—that we need, not just through “the art itself, or the performance but the before and the after”. Art can, like a scholar said, “hold space...almost like a DJ. The artist has a skill but they are also making a space for the ‘audience’ to be.”

Project 560 has supported and implemented projects focusing on a range of otherwise sidelined voices like garment workers, and making, as one respondent said, “visible those people who are part of the community, who you choose not to see,” which makes people feel acknowledged, and a part of the city. A Curated Artistic Engagement discussed during the roundtable demonstrated how arts-focused research can illuminate social, religious, caste, economic and historical relations, all of which are sites of ostensible disconnection in the city. Bringing into public awareness such interconnected narratives counters disconnection and re-records histories. QAMRA, which IFA has previously collaborated with, was also identified as a “resource of great strength”. A socially aware arts practice need not be just on ‘issues’: any engagement that considers the multidimensional layers of resonance of the point of inquiry can build these bridges. This memory-keeping can also be a real-time activity. As a visual artist pointed out, art has a capacity for sustained storytelling, keeping a particular subject in the public conscience, for longer than the media is able to. Walks and projects to document and share the history of the city were particularly valued by respondents as they directly addressed a need. This is reflected in the kind of work that IFA has prioritised.

A writer spoke of how “it’s a very elitist idea, to sit and wait for someone to discover that culture is available only for those who have enough leisure time to find it.” With its vastness and diversity, “Bangalore should be seen as a country.” Art must go to where the people are—whether it is in transit, or online, in the markets or trains, and be held in various localities, and over a period of time.

Art spaces can connect people across socio-economic circles and act as **community centres**. A curator spoke of how there are lots of arts and explorations that are happening at a local level that just need a space to be shared. Kanike, Kala Sahita and Swastika school of dance were mentioned as examples of arts spaces that consistently engage with their neighbourhood. Such engagement can make art a regular and connected part of people’s lives, of a neighbourhood and for its children who will grow up having art as a regular part of their life, and take out the need for travel and lower entry fees. A hobbyist spoke of the need for tactile art, because while there is “lots of art on social media, the medium is one that increases anxiety; we need art that connects and soothes, and grounds.” Apart from conventional venues, there are many potential venues, like unused office spaces during the evenings, and living rooms.

In order to connect to different audiences, art needs to **challenge the dominant aesthetics** shaped by class, culture and caste: a theatre maker saw new people engaging with their work after they curated a series of events for Ambedkar Jayanthi; an arts organiser spoke of the need to “understand the media [and art] habits” of, for example, workers who prioritise video and audio-based media over reading. A deaf activist highlighted the need to change the lens from art for the elite to art by and for the collective. Even having recognisable elements like

an inaugural, as one IFA grantee did, could invite people in. And, “once a person gets interested in art they will get interested in other important things over and above just surviving in town, but to be part of the city both in a cultural and spiritual way,” a writer said.

Sustained engagement, which is a key goal of Project 560 since its reorganisation in 2018, is a need that was echoed by a majority of respondents. One suggestion from a theatre maker was to have partially funded a space that can “morph into different things because we have control over it because an institution has funded us for three years, five years.”

A resource and tool

There needs to be, a mental health professional said, a paradigm shift from art being the purview of ‘artists’ with ‘skill’ and training, and in institutionalised art spaces, to art being a **resource** for everyone to draw on for their social, mental, and community health needs. Pointing out the flaws in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, they spoke of how “everyone needs creative and cultural connection to attend to different parts of the self. The arts serve a fundamentally social purpose and have **inherent social and health benefits**.” Arts interventions have been used, for example, in a project by FAHI with dementia patients to improve fine motor skills, cognitive stimulation and social interaction. Art-based education can enable different kinds of learning and learners in any subject, as a science researcher said.

Arts-based interventions must recognise that art is just a **scaffolding for articulation** of the knowledge that already exists. When interventions trust the intelligence of the people the project is intended for, the project can access its full creative potential. For example, Maraa booked a space for workers day, and the workers designed a full day of programming, going beyond what an artist or facilitator might have predicted as their priorities. Agency, a mental health professional noted, is important to build a sense of belonging and rootedness to a space. They also spoke of a connected need to cultivate long-term respectful relationships with the organisations through which such interventions are facilitated, and challenge the tendency of artists to see everyone as ‘other’.

Theatre and music can be transformative, one arts organiser says. Embodied reenactment can become a site of healing, assertion and liberation. The stage can shift power to people who are not otherwise heard or seen. A theatre maker spoke of how seeing a transperson map the city through their wounds changed his understanding of art and Bangalore. Art and arts-based interventions can be a helpful container and methodology to address harm caused by systemic issues such as caste, a mental health professional observed.

Artistic interventions can raise **civic awareness**, facilitate conversations about commons, public goods, public access, transport, infrastructure, privatisation, participation in governance, etc. As a theatre maker said, “These are often the most mundane, but also the most critical and immediate concerns of the city.” Art can also raise awareness, a science communicator said, on complex and heavy issues such as suicide or care-giving. A theatre maker called for arts funding to support and encourage work that speaks to caste and gender.

“Arts and aesthetics are an integral part of **activism and transformation**,” says an activist. Further, art can “be a more creative way of drawing more people into difficult conversations

and mobilising for a process of change.” Art, and art-like actions, can be a way to provoke and to claim public spaces through creative expressions that can be either subversive of the dominant narrative or even healing. For example, they shared, “for the “Women's Wall”, we appropriated a wall for ourselves near Safina Plaza and painted it with graphics and poetry every year the night before March 8th, or the Women in Black protest at the time of the Babri masjid demolition.” There is only a fine line between political action and political art. As one arts organiser says, art is “not a filler between speeches because the entire war is cultural” and fascists routinely use culture to their ends.

While grants/projects are generally for a period of time and for a certain person or group of people, campaign needs are generally ad hoc and require quick responses. This means, a theatre maker explained, that in using art for a campaign, it is hard to arrange for the venue, organise payment and other logistics within that timeframe. So, it often falls either to artists who are willing to work for free, those who can afford to (who do not monetarily depend on the arts, who do not have other dependents, etc), and often using work that already exists.

On the flipside, a scholar cautions against the trend of people “declaring” their allegiance to an ideology in order to garner audience and access, without deeply engaging with any cause. Art can challenge and break oppressive stereotypes, but art can also be co-opted, a musician points out. For example, singing Kabir at a satsang can depoliticise it, taking attention and resources away from radical musicians and sanitising and appropriating the art. “The audience has become the ‘consumer’, and markets don’t care about ethics,” they say.

Recommendations

Working with **the existing archive of Project 560** could address many of the concerns expressed above. One, several respondents highlighted, Project 560 supports and encourages not just artists but researchers and residents with various backgrounds to conceptualise and execute artistic and cultural projects. Attention brought to this definition of art itself could broaden the public imagination of what is ‘urban’ and what is ‘art’, and challenge the norms and gatekeeping attached to both concepts. Two, projects could be taken to spaces that may not otherwise be considered or catered to as an audience. Three, Project 560 has supported a number of projects that document aspects of the histories of Bangalore; these works would make a valuable public resource in the face of the rapid changes that the city is undergoing. Further, a theatre maker noted that Project 560’s focus on local history and community engagement makes it uniquely placed to be a bridge between residents and policy makers. A concerted effort to include local administration either in the process or inviting them to engage with the project once completed, could enhance the impact of such projects. This has been done in some cases.

As part of Project 560, a list could be created of **spaces across the city**, especially in regions that are underserved, or which invite audiences that artists may not otherwise reach. This could be promoted both for the projects that are granted, as well as made available publicly as a general resource to strengthen the arts in Bangalore.

Funding a local venue combines the intentions behind Project 560’s Neighbourhood Engagement with its Curated Artistic Engagements. Given the scale of such an undertaking

and the quantum of funding that needed, it might be beyond the scope of Project 560. However, centres like this can also be facilitated by connecting artists or residents who can together take up such a project, or bringing attention to such models that already exist.

IFA has a history of supporting art that is explicit and since it is a goal of Project 560 to reach out to underserved communities, one or more grants could be **co-designed with organisations** on the ground working on issues that are considered critical to Bangalore, just as IFA collaborates with archives and museums nation-wide for its Archives and Museums grant.

An activist also suggested that instead of putting out a call for grant applications, Project 560 could proactively **seed projects between artists and civil society actors** who may not consider that art could be a modality. While this may fall outside the practices of IFA, given that applications are chosen by external juries, as part of Project 560, **a directory of civil society organisations and initiatives** and of artists open to do such work in Bangalore could be created so that people can find each other. Promoting work that documents the history of art in movements, or documents the history of activism through an artistic engagement would also be ways to reinforce this idea. In the context of advocating for this kind of work, some respondents spoke of being unsure what IFA envisions itself as. Clarity on this is essential to determine how actively Project 560 seeks out certain kinds of artistic or social engagements and the kind support it designs.

It was suggested that to support **artistic modalities of protest**, a fund be created that was assigned with an intention to support a broad theme of work, guaranteeing certain parameters of outcomes (say, the number of events, and broad concerns that they would address), but was open to evolving when and how they happened, and who was brought together. This would allow work to be financed and created quickly in response to specific events, and for artists to take up the projects without having to forgo basic financial necessities. While IFA does not give grants to organisations, a grant to an individual, under a modified version of the Curatorial Grant that already exists under Project 560, could be a possibility.

Artists

This section looks at the concerns and responsibilities of artists that respondents brought up. A prominent concern was the isolation of artists from each other, as well as the flipside of needing a community and spaces to gather. Respondents also spoke of the precarity of work in the arts and the need for a common minimum standard of labour and ethics. Artists spoke of the need for an environment that was supportive enough that there was space not just to create, but also to rest, experiment and explore. Respondents highlighted the need for art to be rooted, for artists from underrepresented communities to be given the space and resources to create work rather than have interlocutors, as well as systemic change in the arts with better representation of underserved communities in positions of power in arts organisations and arts funding. Recommendations and points of reflection based on these impressions can be found at the end of the section.

Silos

In Bangalore, art, artists and audiences all work, as a scholar said, “in **lots of different bubbles** and these bubbles don’t talk to each other. They all have their different spheres.” While part of this is a consequence of the arts being gig work and unsupported, as a theatre maker said, these bubbles are determined by, among other factors, form, language, culture, class, caste, political leaning, and geography. There are even venues which have told respondents that they don’t “promote cultural events at other spaces in other parts of town.” The lack of collaboration and support ultimately weakens the whole ecosystem. This is a consequence not just of how the arts and art institutions are structured but of broader structural and systemic societal divides in the city.

Arts within some of these **bubbles feels saturated**, with audiences unable to get to all the events that they hear about and artists finding it hard to sell an event. The latter is a consequence of the limited audience circling through the events within the bubble that operates within its thin layer of the city. While there are other arts and artists, some intervention is needed to facilitate cross-over between the bubbles/layers and overcome the biases in what gets recognised and publicised as art in the city. For example, a scholar spoke of Maraa’s work as one that brings together artists across disciplines and venues was cited as one that blurs these lines. Artists could reach out to these other audiences by going to different venues. Having new audiences also shifts the inspiration, and as a respondent said, “affects the kind of art that is made [...] as it helps question who the artist is making work for.” Otherwise, “artists are pigeon holed in the areas that they work in, falling into patterns.”

Artists need, one theatre maker said, to “understand the perspective of the last person”, like the cobblers on the streets who know the city better than most scholars; or “**art narratives are becoming ‘book to book’**.”

Community of Artists

Most respondents felt a desire for connection and recognised the critical role of a **strong artistic community** in the creating art and sustaining artists. This was true across identities, and whatever level of connection the artist felt at the moment. There is both an individual and institutional imperative to foster these connections. The responsiveness, or lack thereof, of arts institutions and organisers to the feedback is critical in shaping an arts ecosystem that is collaborative and non-hierarchical. There is a need for hubs or addas for artists to gather around, to discuss, share, and commune. While some respondents suggested a central institution for artists, others suggested a more decentralised network. Writers, musicians, theatre makers, and visual artists all suggested that early career artists particularly need such spaces. A theatre maker spoke of how, prior to the pandemic, there were more systems for early career artists to learn, collaborate and experiment—fully funded director training programmes, the ‘Short and Sweet’ festival—the “playing grounds that gave one confidence to explore further.” Today, there are spaces to take a finished production, or a clear idea, to but not as much support to ideate and create work. These impressions might be truer for some forms as theatre was said to have had a harder time bouncing back after the pandemic,

compared to music and visual arts; and some visual artists felt that there is an increase in the spaces for experimentation in Bangalore.

Artists can also create decentralised hubs to share resources, like an example shared by a visual artist of a potter who invested in a kiln and fires items for others for a small fee. This lowers the **barrier of entry and experimentation**. There are also models of rent-sharing like a group of contemporary dancers in Bangalore have done, or spaces that have created infrastructure, like Pagal Canvas Backyard. Along with the factual scarcity, there are also limiting notions of scarcity that need to be challenged so that all stakeholders are better able to tap into and develop a strong network of support. One musician, who has been able to tap into various networks, shared how a base of trust and openness was critical to the connections that they had made.

Terms of Work

Multiple artists spoke of how the lack of any standard of terms of work makes artists vulnerable as it is difficult and unsustainable to negotiate fair terms individually. A musician, who also had experience with theatre, spoke of the particularly **exploitative nature of contracts** in music where labels and platforms take most of the profits and have far more negotiating power. Contracts are often long term and exclusive, with no reliable schedule of payment. The artist isn't allowed to promote any other event for a week before and after a gig on their own social media. When artists are flown to a place for an event, they are not allowed to do any other events, including private events, for the duration of their stay. Class and caste also impact the contracts that musicians get. In the past years, all artists have been asked to take on more responsibilities such as marketing and be constantly online not just for their independent undertakings but even for festivals and other events; grants, festivals, conferences and even venues could take on some of the onus of marketing, and budget for it. Broadly, the expectation that all artists should be able to ideate, communicate, budget, account, produce, report, and market their art, is a high bar, impossible for most to clear. This requirement for artists to play all these roles is recognised by initiatives like the Unheard Studio Residency.

Multiple interviewees noted that budgets for residencies, grants, and events routinely exclude the cost of the **artist's labour**. Residencies expect artists to be present full time, and also do admin work, without pay; grants often cap the artist's fee. This forces artists to take up other work in order to sustain themselves during the grant period, diverting their time and energies. While designing grants, the cost of living should be taken into account for the period of the grant and a liveable wage for the artist should be factored into the budget. At minimum, since the primary resource needed to make art is the artist, the cap on artist fees should be lifted.

Respondents also mentioned the need for institutional standards for ethics. Standard agreements need to protect artist's rights and have more favourable terms for things like copyright, licensing and royalties. The question of rights and plagiarism is complex in all arts, but especially folk arts, as the knowledge is held by a community. The ethics of an NGO copyrighting music that it collects to 'preserve' through studies and projects is murky. The larger question is whether the idea of rights over art itself can be troubled. A musician shared

how the rise of **A.I** generates additional concerns as it scrapes work by artists without consent, removing information about its sources, uses biased data sets, and exacerbates the digital divide, which was already made acute by the pandemic. It also eliminates artistic discovery and input, which are critical to art.

Spaces

Affordable spaces to work, rehearse, and perform are key to artists' ability to create work. **Venues and studios are expensive** for both artists and audiences. A musician pointed out that without external funding (usually family money or CSR), venues cannot sustain themselves. There are smaller venues today, but this comes at the cost of having centres where various kinds of arts co-exist alongside each other, and many have shut down in the past few years. Rehearsals within homes have also become restricted as there is a sense that neighbours are now more likely to complain about noise and disturbances as a result of changes in the culture of the city and a consequence of 'others' coming in.

Studios and stages are unable to meet the **cost of maintenance and upgrading equipment**. A dancer pointed to the lack of sprung floors, and a musician highlighted the lack of up-to-date sound systems even in the best auditoriums in the city. Ideally, with external funding like CSR, venues should be able to support themselves and the artists as well, said a musician. One policy level issue that needs institutional intervention is that the government **taxes arts spaces at commercial rates** which then means, to sustain themselves, the spaces are rented out for corporate events, parties, etc.

Even within arts spaces, only certain kinds of art and events are allowed, particularly in government run spaces, which are more economical in general, says a theatre maker. And "as the city grew, the politics also grew," and now most government-run spaces are only accessible through personal connections.

There has been a move towards 'purist' art spaces. **Bangalore's pubs**, as highlighted by musicians, like bFLAT used to be gathering points for people where art was integrated into people's lives. These were also spaces where there was less pressure on the performer, where musicians could come, perform and get a cut of the sales during the time that they were there.

Third spaces like parks are valuable for rehearsals and jamming, and the restrictions on their use has affected the means of creating and engaging with arts, and certain things—like dance and theatre—are more likely to be shut down.

Experimenting and Experiencing

Artists need time and **space to experiment**, to create work which is not, at least at first instance, for the 'market'. There is also a need for fallow periods, both in the larger cycle of the year, and within each project period. As one musician asks, "can we have a city that sleeps? [...] If everybody cared about each other's rest, the economics and the functioning of the city would change." Given the precarious context of art, one needs to consider what might enable artists to, as Thoreau said, stand up and live before they sit down and write. Some artists experienced support from venues to explore and experiment, but the prerequisite seems to be of mutual trust and connections. This goes back to the need to foster a feeling of

community, to build the recognition that the relationships between artists, venues, funders, etc. are ones of inter-dependence.

In terms of funding, multiple artists mentioned the need for grants to take into account the natural **development and deviation** of the project from its starting point as a welcome result of the process. Application processes, including IFA's, expect a level of clarity and precision from the stage of writing the proposal, and for the project not to deviate from the brief laid out. Multiple respondents said that either they, or people they knew, were told "to be careful" with their proposals to IFA, to ensure that the project did not develop differently. However, respondents across arts practices spoke of the need to let the work evolve. It is a sign of ongoing discovery that a project develops in ways that were not envisioned prior to the start of the work.

Rooted and responsive

A visual artist spoke of how powerful art is made in **response to a lived context**, rooted in the "organic territory of the land, culture, foods, the immediate and visceral experience." In contrast, they observed that local arts engagements that they see today are treated not as an end in themselves but as a stepping stone to something on a larger scale. Building these relationships, both between artists and between artists and the people that they work with, as an arts organiser said, takes deep time. Community is a long-term commitment, and a critical consideration both for artists and arts organisations. When engaging with a particular community, consistency is critical to build relationships and credibility, a mental health professional stated.

There is an intention from artists, a need identified by respondents, and a priority of Project 560, to engage with populations in Bangalore that are underserved. However, an arts organiser highlighted the need to be cautious of the trend towards fetishizing, gentrifying and **commodifying the value of a community**. Artists must be encouraged to enter spaces with an awareness of the dynamics involved in the interaction. Artists should be constantly self-critical. It is unreasonable to expect any one person to be aware of all the factors. So, long-term relationships, and working through and with organisations that already have a presence on the ground, are ways to ensure that the intervention is embedded in and continuous with the needs and priorities of the community. Even what may seem obvious, like workers wanting to be grouped and catered to as workers, may not be true.

There is, an arts organiser says, "an attitude of benevolence to the working class," though they are the ones who know the city best. It is, for example, more likely to have a project that documents the work of potters in pottery town than a project by a potter in Pottery Town. There is a need to, as they said, to "change the centre"; instead of taking arts or artists to the ghettos, to start work from there. We need more people from the communities who are underrepresented to tell their own stories without an interlocutor. The work of organisations like Jangama and Adavi are examples of what this could look like. Arts intervention could be workshops that seed an artistic practice in a community, like Maraa did with SIEDS in Anekal, creating a women-led tamte group. Artists, arts organisations and audiences must shift away from the class-based welfare orientation; a respondent spoke of the collective

responsibility, not just of Project 560, IFA or even only artists, to **transfer social, cultural capital, and redistribute resources**. The goal should ultimately be to **make the artist, facilitator or arts organisation redundant in the continuation of the project or artistic engagements** within a community in general.

Recommendations

To address the isolation and separation between different artistic circles, Project 560 events could be **organised at different locations**. IFA could also organise conversations between artists and venues that might not otherwise cross-over, and work under Project 560 could be specifically encouraged to go to a diversity of spaces. This would also strengthen Project 560's aim of deep and broad engagement with the layers of a subject or the city as a work interacts with various communities and parts of the city.

As a public resource for artists in Bangalore, part of the work that Project 560 does could be to highlight locations like cafes in the city that provide low-cost **spaces for artists to gather**, highlight walk-throughs and other efforts by artists with local studios to share their processes and space. Project 560 could also have a component where it organises **periodic mixers** for artists, or for artists and people in other disciplines, and share information through a directory of practitioners and experts—ecologists, scholars, activists, artists, scientists—who could be contacted for mentoring or collaboration. This could also operate wider than Project 560, but could be linked by having these during the period preceding the calls for applications under each category.

Another suggestion to generally strengthen the arts community in Bangalore is to highlight and build on **resource-sharing** that artists are undertaking, possibly by creating or facilitating a kind of lending library of crowd sourced materials that artists and others could donate to and draw from.

Project 560 could **host resourcing workshops** about contracts, calculating a living wage, and other terms of work, with resource people like Artistik License, and about AI and new technology for artists in Bangalore, as IFA has previously hosted workshops, for example during the pandemic.

An artist suggested a **baseline survey** of artists in Bangalore to assess experiences and needs, and formulate minimum basic standards of a good contract for ethics, labour, wages and other terms in the arts. Project 560 could commission such a survey, as well as facilitate spaces for regular informal dialogue between artists to come to such an agreement which is not reliant on individual negotiating power.

While IFA's influence over public policy is limited, as an established institution, it can lobby with authorities and challenge some, though not all, restrictions on the use of public spaces for art, which could have cascading effects on public use. IFA could also **document and share information** about the procedures to access public spaces in Bangalore, or offer to facilitate such processes. This could start with documenting and sharing the processes followed to conduct events under Project 560, for example the permissions required for a walk, or a performance in a public space.

The means of assessment of projects under Project 560 needs to account for, and even encourage deviation and evolution beyond the project proposal. IFA already has a process in place for interim sharing which includes and allows for budget modifications and changes to final outcomes in conversation with the programme officer to accommodate shifts that may happen in the field or artistic processes. In light of the feedback and experience shared by grantees, it would be beneficial to review the effectiveness of this process and strengthen it.

To “change the centre”, more artists from underrepresented communities need to be given grants directly, rather than grants going to interlocutors. Taking this idea one step further, a theatre artist, emphasising the need to **decentralise control and direction of arts**, suggested handing over control of a grant to an organisation working at the grassroots for a period of time, letting their focus shape the grant itself and how it is disbursed. Ideally, the funding organisation staff or project officers in charge of such funds would be members of the communities that it wants to serve.

Funding

This section delves into the reflections shared about the arts economy as a precarious sector, its biases and hierarchies, as well as impressions of Project 560, the process to apply for grants, reporting requirements, and the experience of working through the grant.

As stated in the introduction, the respondents were largely unfamiliar with the specifics of Project 560, and thus it is not possible to distinguish which IFA grant their impressions are drawn from. While some respondents mentioned members of IFA, the connection made was more to the organisation at large than to any specific grant that they administered. The impressions thus largely refer either to arts funding broadly or to IFA, though an attempt has been made to identify areas of need and apply them specifically to Bangalore and Project 560. Recommendations and points of reflection based on these impressions can be found at the end of the section.

A fragile economy

Success in the arts was defined by some respondents as **artists being able to sustain themselves and stay in the arts**. This is a challenge in a fundamentally precarious sector with limited resources, social security and institutional support. Money and material resources are often a limiting factor of artistic work. There is an impression of increasing economic instability due to the shifts in economic relationships, social dynamics and technology. The current dominant experience of the arts space is hierarchical and the flow of money imitates the flow of power in other aspects. **Caste and other systemic biases** still play a role in who holds power, who benefits, where money goes, and whose labour is assumed to be free. The lack of collective standards makes individual artists vulnerable to employment conditions that are less than ideal. The instability also deeply affects the mental health of artists. Each form of art experiences slightly different conditions: musicians are worse off than theatre actors; classical dancers are paid less than classical musicians; some say that there is less funding for new artists, some for senior artists. Venues share some ticket fees with artists, but it is a largely unsustainable system for the artist or the venue. Few artists are able to live project to project, with most taking up one or more other jobs. It is primarily

those with financial support from their families, and without dependents, who are able to stay in the arts full time. A theatre maker spoke of how this vulnerability forces artists to make choices based on economics, which weakens the ability of artists to stand in solidarity with each other and build a healthier, more ethical arts community.

Traditionally, certain art forms have been supported by patrons, zamindars, and the government, as opposed to the classical arts where the primary income is from fees paid by students. Government support has been cut down in recent years; “cooling off periods” have been introduced. There are also delays and corruption in government support for the arts, with one former member of the Karnataka Janapada Academy speaking of money being siphoned off rather than used for the arts. To keep these arts alive, funding may have to be just production grants, but consider their traditional economies and knowledge building systems and tailor support accordingly. For example, while it may be impractical to replace the government funding for a gurukul or repertoire, components such as the knowledge exchange Yakshagana—Bhagavatike Samshodana Shibira—can be supported.

Respondents had varied ideas on the **allocation of resources**—one visual artist spoke of needing to support the same artists periodically, whereas another suggested that people should not get grants in consecutive years; another spoke of the disparity in the sum that is granted locally and internationally and how only a few can access the money that would make it sustainable. The subtext in all these conversations was the scarcity of resources, and these are all choices between bad options.

To address this general lack of avenues of support in the long run, a robust arts economy needs a multiplicity of sources for funding and other support. Ultimately, all organisers, including IFA, should aim to make their work redundant to either the particular artists being supported, or to the arts ecosystem in Bangalore broadly, at least in their current roles, by making the artists and the arts self-sufficient.

Project 560

IFA’s stable and long presence in the arts field has led to a general familiarity since people see projects that are supported around the city. IFA is a critical and prestigious source of funding, a **certification of quality**—of the project and the artist—that opens doors. There is an impression of IFA promoting good art, as well as a particular appreciation for its recognition that artistic engagements will benefit not just from people who are artists, but also researchers, and people engaged in other fields of inquiry, or engaged with their neighbourhoods.

Project 560 was associated primarily with the Neighbourhood Engagements grant. Which other programs fell under the umbrella was unclear to most (for example, one person spoke of the arts education programme). This lack of clarity about the internal structure of grants and projects doesn’t matter as long as people know of and can access all the grants, though it does make it hard to separate specific impressions of Project 560 with impressions of IFA.

While the overall impression of Project 560 is of sustained engagement with the arts, the understanding of the projects individually is they “**seeds many ideas**” through “**short lived**

activations". While respondents were cognisant of the fact that artists primarily work project-to-project, an arts organiser also put forward the need to consider what these ephemeral engagements do to the aesthetics of the city. The life of a project beyond the grant duration was also seen as a measure of its success.

In terms of **budgets**, the Arts Research/Practice money is seen as substantial. Both in the interviews, as well as at the round table, respondents recommended raising the budget of the Neighbourhood Engagements grant. Respondents also recommended taking off the cap on artists' fees. Whatever enables an artist to make work, even if it is paying rent as one respondent stated, would be the best use of the money. A theatre maker spoke of the need for IFA to be a bridge between the organisations that provide the funds and the artists. "It is a challenge to convince CSR because the corporations are enriching their own circular economy".

In terms of the **scheduling of grants**, multiple respondents shared a need to have grant and project windows spread across the year—both within IFA and across granting organisations. If one applies simultaneously to multiple places, one is bound to accept whichever result comes first and reject any other funding. In India specifically, the precariousness of the arts economy makes it difficult to plan out work for a whole year, says a theatre maker. The long period of uncertainty, and delays in results of a call being shared add to the stress of an already precarious field. There is also just a lack of clarity on when calls open up.

Political Impressions

There is an impression that IFA is an organisation that prioritises work that is by, about, or for people of marginalised communities. Though IFA and Project 560 have no official political position, its body of work is sensitive to issues such as caste, class and gender and Project 560 aims to address inequalities in the city, and reach out to diverse communities. These choices are commendable in the current climate, and since caste, class and privilege play a significant role, in society generally, the art and artists who are supported, and the constitution of major arts institutions, as one theatre maker pointed out. However, these may also be viewed as partisan choices, particularly by artists who see themselves in opposition to this leaning, and have stopped some people from applying for grants/projects.

If there is such a priority, respondents have suggested that it be expressly stated. While such a statement could reach out to more people from particular communities, making the conscious effort to work with and for marginalized communities without making a declaration might work better. First, it makes inclusion and diversity a norm rather than a special criterion. However, a scholar cautioned about the trend of artists "declaring their politics" without backing it up with real engagement. There is also the impression that applications for projects promote such statements as there is "a particular way in which these stances are expected to be stated." There is a need to discourage, and see past, superficial statements to assess the depth of work.

Applications, Rejections and Reporting

“In the arts, any money is welcome,” said one respondent. But a funding organisation has the potential to also be a point of support for artists and “lift them up”. The first point of contact at IFA has, in the past, been discouraging. There should be supportive avenues to access information, before and after the application. These impressions seem to be primarily from a few years ago and some of the more recent interactions seem more supportive, though the old impressions continue to shape interactions.

The language required by the application is **academic and analytical**, ‘ArtSpeak’ as one respondent put it. It is accessible only to the privileged few with institutional arts training. There is a need then, as a theatre maker said, to “enable people of other profiles.” This is in line with the questions that IFA is reflecting on during this review process. As one theatre maker said, “Most artists are not writers, else they would have been content writers.” People are unable to formulate this language in even their mother tongue, and “English educated, language savvy people” have also expressed an inability to write in the required jargon. This impression of intellectualisation is not only from those whose applications have been rejected previously, but also among current and former grantees. There needs to be a distinction between critical thinking and work expressed through the artist’s relevant skill set, and the attempt to capture these ideas in words, particularly in writing. As one respondent said, “Nobody should get a grant for the way that they write applications.” Prioritising the way that applications are written is both restrictive to those who cannot articulate in words, and favours those who can articulate but whose practice itself may not be as strong. A few respondents also mentioned the difficulty of coming up with a detailed budget at the start of a project, one, because it is not a skill that all artists have, and two, because the needs of the project will evolve as it develops.

The process of **rejection** by IFA has been a point of significant criticism. Some people feel selections are based on connections, while others don’t. Extensions of deadlines, which is routine with IFA, were seen as evidence of bias, to make time for specific people to apply. Rejection messages have come across as boilerplate, sometimes referring to conditions (themes) that were unstated. The number of applications IFA gets, in comparison to the funds available, necessitates a roughly 99% rejection rate so a rejection does not automatically imply a lack of potential, rather a combination of factors including luck and priorities not just of IFA but of the external juries, as people in IFA have said as well, but this does not come across currently in the communications.

Reporting processes for grants, including IFA’s, feel bureaucratic and cumbersome. Overly detailed reporting and record keeping requirements take away from time that might be better spent on creating art. It is also perceived as starting from a level of mistrust in the artist. This mistrust also extends to IFA’s accounting process.

Collaboration

“Hierarchies of funder-artist are not conducive to the arts ecosystem,” a theatre maker noted. However, this is the impression with most funding organisations, including IFA. There is an oppositional relationship between a significant portion of the respondents and IFA as an

institution. There is “an impression of inflexibility that the institution is at the centre, and not the artist.” Part of the opposition is natural in an environment of limited resources but these perceptions are fed both by self-positioning (a feeling in IFA that it cannot share its limitations with artists) and by external assumptions and experiences. Altogether, this prevents people from applying, from engaging critically and collaboratively with Project 560. IFA needs to acknowledge the power that it holds, while also building more equal relationships through both structural changes and addressing perception. To foster an arts ecosystem in Bangalore that feels and functions like a community, there needs to be a recognition of the interdependence.

Recommendations

The Curated Artistic Engagements category could be publicised more as it is intended to address many needs expressed by respondents.

The budget for the Neighbourhood Engagements could be increased. A suggested amount was 1-1.2 lakh rupees. This would change the scale and kind of projects, and invite projects by people who have less external economic resources.

The **cap on artists’ fee** for all projects under Project 560 could be removed. If there needs to be a cap, then when advocating for a budget for project, IFA should push for a liveable wage for the artist for the project period, just as it builds its own salaries into the budget. Broadly, a theatre maker spoke of the need for IFA to be a bridge between the organisations that provide the funds and the artists. IFA, as an arts funding organisation can account for the reality of art and artists and advocate for them and for more flexible terms of work in reporting processes, artists’ fees, etc.

A theatre maker suggested **small-scale one-time financial support**, such as micro grants and travel grants that could bridge the gaps and enable artists to engage in programs like residencies, festivals and courses. This could be introduced as a new component of Project 560, where artists can apply for funds to support specific needs throughout the year.

The calls and project periods under Project 560 could be **staggered** through the year. On the IFA website, there could be one tab with the list of open calls, and a schedule when other grants will open up. This could also be extended beyond Project 560 to all IFA programmes.

For the budget, it was suggested that the application could ask for broad requirements rather than detailed specifics, if there needs to be a breakdown at all.

To invite applications from a broader range of artists, respondents suggested looking at the body of work of the artist to assess the skills of the artist. Broadly, the responsibility of having the **skill to discern intention** beyond the text should be of the granting organisation and the jury members rather than the artist.

In order to get applications from outside ‘saturated’ areas, Project 560 could go to spaces like slums, local colleges and community organisations, and specifically request them. Other ways to solicit proposals from newer demographics are to put up physical posters in various

languages at venues where such people gather, to share the calls through the personal networks of people connected to ‘other groups’ including using their social media networks.

There is no number by which IFA can increase its projects that would significantly change the percentage of **rejection**. However, to ensure the impression of fairness, application deadlines can be maintained, especially given that there is no dearth of applications. And rejection emails could include the reasons for rejection as well as offers of other support. Artists have asked for **reasoned feedback** to improve their project ideas, and to tailor applications for future calls. There are already some feedbacking mechanisms in place, but they don’t seem to be perceived as supportive enough. For projects rejected due to constraints of funding and the jury’s choices, projects under Project 560 could, as some other projects do, offer to share information about other projects (which is already a practice), to connect the artist to **other resources**, and to amplify the work if it is made. Part of the brief for this survey was how to find out how to reach diverse audiences. IFA is, in its own words, not known among all circles. This pool of applications not only knows of IFA’s work, but engages with it and is in contact. Goodwill here can help Project 560 achieve its goals of connecting to more people and seeding a broader community of artists. This is delicate and labour-intensive work, but if Project 560 can bridge these divides and dispel these impressions, it can begin to break the silos in the arts in the city.

While certain **reporting standards** may be needed given the sources of funds, Project 560 could provide assistance and account for report writing not being a skill most artists have. For the past 12 years, IFA has offered a two-day orientation across all their programmes, and three project orientations every year. For the past two years, they have also organised two to three financial workshops to assist with budgeting expenses and reporting. These efforts address some of the gaps in information brought up by grantees. But given the impressions shared by the grantees, there may be a need to make the reporting process simpler or briefer, or to provide more hands-on assistance on an ongoing basis.

In order to build an **artistic community**, artists need to be brought in not only to share their issues, but as partners to consult on hurdles and limitations that Project 560 faces. Smaller actions, like more timely responses, and updates about delays, would also help.

IFA’s institutionalised reflective processes can be more publicised as most respondents were unaware of them. This is rare in the arts, especially on a systematic rather than personal level and can be seen as a best practice for organisers and even artists. **Transparency about the actions taken**, and the reasoning behind what was actioned and other choices, could strengthen the perception of collaboration with the artistic community in Bangalore.

To create a robust ecosystem in Bangalore more broadly, some steps could be creating a **database of arts funding** organisations, calendars of residencies, sources of ad hoc support, and other opportunities for artists. This would help make visible and accessible the spectrum of current support available. Information about public schemes and social security mechanisms for artists would also be valuable, possibly in collaboration with an initiative like Artistik License.

It was suggested that Project 560 could **fund infrastructure**, especially with their durational projects, enabling people to build spaces and institutions for arts, ultimately self-sustaining systems that function without and beyond external support. Another suggestion is to create material on how to **run artistic spaces more efficiently**, and how to get patronage for individuals and collectives. A theatre maker suggested that IFA could support **artists to directly advocate** for themselves, especially if there is a company with a CSR budget and an interest in the arts who IFA is unable to work with for any reason, or artists who IFA is unable to directly support, though the practicality of such a step is unclear.

Given IFA's long and sustained presence, respondents in various fields recognise a potential for IFA to work not just on a project-to-project basis, but to **“operate at a structural level”**, especially through Project 560 and in Bangalore where it is based. It can engage in policy, advocacy and affect systematic change, questioning and challenging things like the restrictions in public policies on what art is performed and where, ticketing and marketing platform policies, contract terms with online platforms, and advocating for government funding. A mental health professional spoke of how IFA can advocate for things like how arts can exist as a profession, as an ally to health and education, for an arts centre in every ward, for artist pensions and social security. A component of Project 560 could be to bring such research and action on the arts to policy makers.

Conclusion

Project 560, and India Foundation for the Arts, performs a vital role in the arts in Bangalore. Periodic reviews are indicative of their commitment to reflection. The arts in Bangalore are both precarious—with low wages, cumbersome grant application and reporting requirements, and exploitative contracts—and thriving, with accessible, subversive art that facilitate healing, remembering, joy, and rest.

Nearly all respondents noted that people work in siloes—that often reflect broader hierarchies such as language, caste, class, and institutional power—and the need for community among artists, within the arts ecosystem, and residents of Bangalore. Culture is the site of division, as much as it can be the site of gathering. It can remember stories of the past, create bridges, and fold in new stories into the city.

There is a long-term need to decentralise power, and IFA is uniquely placed to address some of these systemic issues. Project 560 could bring artists on board not just as beneficiaries, but as partners, and collectively address the hurdles of the arts ecosystem, and start to dismantle some hierarchies of the arts ecosystem in the city.

Annexure: Questionnaire for Researcher

1. Are you familiar with IFA's Project 560 programme? What are your observations about it?
2. When you hear "Urban Arts" and "City-Based Projects," what immediately comes to mind?
3. What do you perceive as the emerging concerns for cities, and how do city-based art initiatives address them?
4. How can artistic practices illuminate the underlying forces and patterns of urban dynamics? In what ways do city-based arts influence how cities are produced and imagined? Conversely, how can public/urban/city-based art projects redefine or expand our understanding of art itself?
5. What key directions should arts projects in the city pursue?
6. Could you describe some city-based projects you have observed?
7. Which city-based art projects do you believe have been particularly successful in Bangalore, and why?
8. How can an arts programme effectively respond to the needs and aspirations of a city's residents? What types of projects do you think resonate most with them?
9. What kinds of arts interventions have the most meaningful impact on cities?
10. In what various modes can art intervene to address inequalities within a city?
11. Are there specific thematic concerns that you feel warrant more attention in city-based art?
12. How can IFA enhance its reach and accessibility across different demographics of the city?
13. Beyond financial aid, what other forms of support are valuable from a funder? What are your broader expectations from an organization like IFA?